WITH JOHN PAUL JONES

JOHN T. McINTYRE

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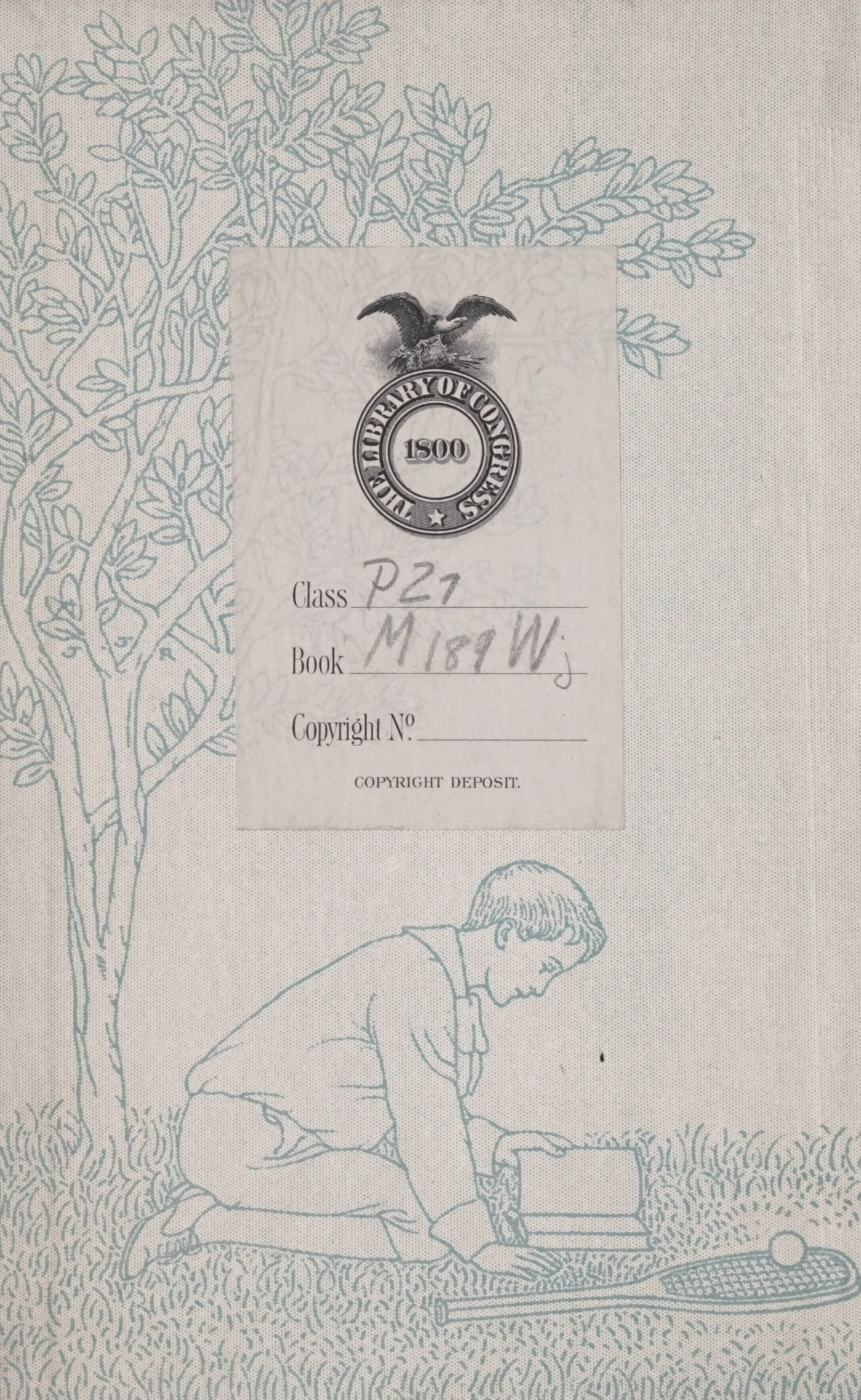

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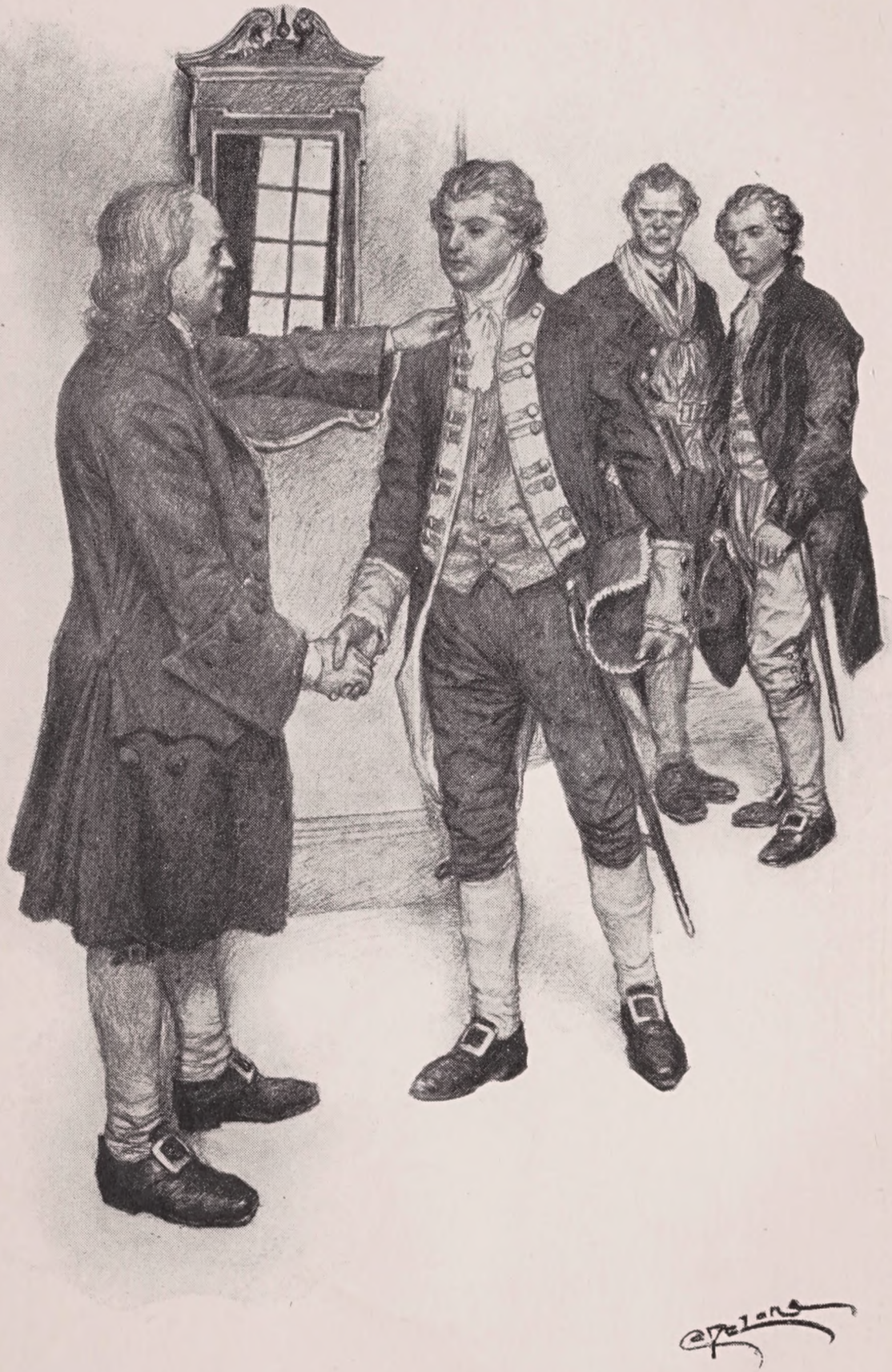

JOHN PAUL JONES FLUSHED WITH PLEASURE

With
JOHN PAUL JONES

by

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"Fighting King George" etc.

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by
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With John Paul Jones

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With John Paul Jones

CHAPTER I

HOW ETHAN CARLYLE BROUGHT THE NEWS OF BURGOYNE'S SURRENDER

"WHO is that man that is so much at the Wheelocks' just now?" asked young Walter Stanton of his friend Philip Morgan.

"Some Tory friend, I suppose. I don't like him; see the sneer upon his face as he looks at the members upon the steps of the State House."

It was about noon on a day late in September in the year 1777. A group of young men and boys were lounging upon some benches in the shade of two big buttonwoods directly across from the quaint old State House at Philadelphia. The sun hung almost over the tower whose bell had boomed freedom to a nation only a little more than a year before; upon the stone steps of the building stood a

number of grave-faced, earnest gentlemen, members of the first Continental Congress, talking of the weighty matters that were to be discussed in the approaching session.

The man who had attracted Walter Stanton's attention was a person of striking appearance. He had thick, coal-black hair, a pale, keen face and a frame that showed strength and endurance. A boy of about nineteen stood at his side, and they were both talking in low tones and watching the patriot-legislators as they slowly assembled. Philip Morgan was right when he said that the stranger wore a sneer upon his face. That cold look of pitying contempt and the curl of the man's lip could mean nothing else. A stir went through the crowd of lads as an erect, care-worn man passed slowly along, with bent head and an air of great abstraction, every hat came off with a sweep of respect.

"Who is that man?" asked the stranger of Walter.

"That," answered the boy, "is Mr. Hancock, president of Congress."

The stranger's teeth gleamed in a mocking smile.

"Ah, yes, I have heard of him," he said. "It was he that caused this war with England."

Walter and Philip looked at each other; the boy at the man's side nudged him in a manner that said as plainly as words: "Be careful of what you say."

"It's news to me," spoke Walter Stanton, "to hear that Mr. John Hancock was the cause of the war."

"We had always fancied that it was begun by that old madman, King George," said Philip Morgan, who was a blunt spoken lad at best; and the man's manner irritated him. The stranger bent his brows and a glint of anger came into his sharp, black eyes. He seemed upon the point of making a biting retort; but once more the boy at his side warned him to beware.

"Be careful, Danvers," he whispered. "You'll get into trouble. They are all Whigs here."

Danvers hesitated a moment; then he turned to Philip with a cold smile that showed his strong white teeth.

"If it had not been for Major Pitcairn's be-

ing called out that day with his men to seize this Mr. Hancock for treason to the crown, there would have been no fight at Lexington; and had that skirmish not taken place there would have been no rebellion."

"Revolution is a better word, I think," said Walter Stanton, quietly.

"Call it what you will," answered the man sneeringly, "the fact remains the same."

"And I don't like your calling the fight at Lexington a skirmish," spoke the blunt-tongued Philip, who had come to think of that first exchange of shots as a most glorious engagement. "It resulted in three hundred British troops being killed, and when Putnam and Arnold hurried up to take command of the minutemen, they walled General Gage up in Boston, for all his army and ships."

"Putnam!" said the man in his mocking way. "What is he? An old farmer turned soldier; and Arnold is a swaggering, reckless ruffian."

"Be quiet," whispered Stephen Wheelock, as he dragged at the man's sleeve, his face growing pale as he noted the resentful expres-

sions of those about them. "Be quiet, I tell you!"

Danvers' quick eye saw the effect of his words and he smiled coolly. It seemed as though he rather enjoyed the risk he ran in being so open in his words.

"Never fear," said he, in a low tone to young Wheelock. "I only want to stir them up a bit. I'll be careful not to go too far."

"You'll get my father into hot water, Danvers, if you don't mind yourself," warned Stephen, drawing the man aside. "The Whigs know that our family sympathize with the cause of the king; and it must not be known that we harbor agents of Lord North's government."

"Hush!" warned Danvers, in his turn. "They will know it soon enough, and you'll have my neck in a halter, if you use such terms as that in this public place."

"Give them no cause for suspicion, then," said young Wheelock. "I've seen them aroused more than once, and it's not a pleasant thing to look at, indeed."

Philip Morgan's ire was aroused by the words of Danvers, and he was talking loudly.

"Let the English say what they like," cried he, "we have as good officers as they, and perhaps better. And we were faithful to the king, too, until he hired the Brunswickers and Hessians to come and fight against us. No free men could stand such a thing as that."

"No, no," chorused the boys upon the benches.

"That was the last straw," said Walter Stanton. "If King George had not done that, the gentlemen across the way would never have written, passed and signed the Declaration of Independence, July a year ago."

So interested were all the boys in the talk, which now became general, that they did not notice a horseman ride up, dismount and tie his nag to a post near at hand. He was a tall, spare, raw-boned man, with fiery red hair. He held himself with the rigid bearing of a man trained in the army; his face was resolute, indeed fierce looking; and an ugly sword slash had left a red scar across it that did not add to his appearance. He stood at his horse's head listening, as Philip Morgan went on, addressing Danvers.

"You may sneer at Putnam if you like, sir, but he is a bold and able officer, and so is General Arnold. Why, Arnold's invasion of Canada alone would stamp him as an uncommon man."

"He had Richard Montgomery with him," said Danvers, coldly, "and Montgomery got what little training he had as an officer in the British army. The best that one can say of him is that he was brave."

At the name of the intrepid and lamented Montgomery, the fierce looking man with the scar upon his face had bent forward interestedly; but at the words of Danvers he stepped forward, his strong fingers twisting nervously.

"I knew General Montgomery," said he to Danvers; "he was the cleverest officer I ever saw."

Danvers turned and swept him with an insolent look.

"And, pray, sir, who are you?" he asked.

"Shamus O'Moore, once of the Iniskillens," answered the newcomer, standing very erect and speaking in a harsh, high voice.

"Ah," sneered Danvers, "an English dragoon."

"No," said the other with great promptness, "an Irish dragoon."

"It is all the same," spoke Danvers.

"Pardon me," protested the other, still in the same tone, and never budging an inch in his ramrod like attitude. "There is no sameness about it at all. Faith, ye could never make an Englishman out of an Irishman in the world. They are like oil and water, and they won't mix."

"It's the man they call Longsword," whispered Walter Stanton to his chum, Philip Morgan.

"I know," answered the latter. "I've seen him at Ethan Carlyle's several times."

"General Montgomery," said the soldier-like O'Moore, "were an Irishman like meself and proud he were of it. He gave up his life for this struggling nation, sir, in the storming of Quebec; and it was no common life, I'll have ye know. There was in him the makings of a general officer that would have astonished the world."

"Oh, you fancy yourself a judge, I see," said Danvers, icily.

"Man and boy, I've soldiered for thirty

years," said the other, "and I've had lots of time to pick up stray bits of knowledge by the wayside."

As Danvers turned away to give his attention to young Wheelock, who was again plucking warningly at his sleeve, O'Moore noticed Walter Stanton and favored him instantly with a stiff, formal salute.

"Hello, O'Moore," said Walter. "Where is Ethan?"

"Master Ethan will be here in a few moments," returned O'Moore. "There he is beyant, speaking with Mr. Jefferson."

The lads turned their eyes in the direction indicated, and saw a gentleman garbed in sober black standing in the footway some little distance off conversing excitedly with a clean built, handsome boy of seventeen, who was seated astride a powerful bay horse.

"Did you know that Ethan was secretary to Mr. Jefferson, now?" asked Walter, as they watched the two with interest.

"Yes," answered Philip. "His father and Mr. Jefferson were great friends, O'Moore, were they not?"

"Indeed, yes, sir," said the ex-dragoon.

"And Mr. Jefferson visited him at New Orleans before the war came on."

"They seem greatly interested in their talk," observed Walter, still gazing toward the lad on the bay horse and the black clad statesman. "I never saw Mr. Jefferson so excited, and I've seen him many times and listened to his speeches."

"And it's no wonder, Master Stanton, that he do be excited now," said Shamus. "Sure he's listening to better news then he's heard in many a long day. While taking a gallop on the north roads this morning, Master Ethan and meself came upon a courier from New York whose horse had stumbled, thrown him and broken his leg. We carried him to an inn where he'd be taken care of; and when he found out who Master Ethan were he handed over his despatches and bid us ride to the city wid them and give them to Mr. Hancock, the president of the Congress."

"There is news from the north, then?" cried Walter, his eyes opening wider in expectation.

"Good news, too, you said, O'Moore," said Philip Morgan. "Come, now, tell us what it is."

The other boys had risen from their seats upon the benches, and all crowded eagerly about the grim looking dragoon.

"What's the news?" they clamored. "Tell us the news."

"Ye'll hear it in another moment," said O'Moore, a smile flickering on his lips. "Here comes Master Ethan now."

The sober looking gentleman in black, had just waved the boy upon the horse delightedly away; the lad touched his mount with the spur and dashed down the street toward the state house. Mr. Hancock stood upon the low stone steps in the midst of a group of members engaged in earnest talk, when the bay was pulled up sharply, and the boy upon his back called in a voice that trembled with excitement:

"Mr. Hancock."

That gentleman raised his brows in some little surprise at this; then his face wrinkled in a smile and he nodded his recognition.

"News from the north!" cried the boy as he swung a bulky saddle packet over his head.

The expression of every man present

changed instantly; every voice was hushed, every face was strained and anxious. For weeks they had been swayed, pendulum-like, between hope and fear; and now the result was to be known.

"Burgoyne," shouted the boy, as he swung himself exultantly from his horse, "has surrendered to General Gates at Saratoga."

Then, amidst the clapping of hands and the shouts of the crowd that had gathered like magic, he strode across the walk, his spurs jingling on the flags, and handed the despatches to the president of the Continental Congress.

CHAPTER II

HOW A SPY LISTENED AT THE WINDOW

SHAMUS O'MOORE took his young master's horse and his own to a neighboring stable where they were in the habit of putting them up, and then returned to the state house. Ethan was busy with a huge portfolio of Mr. Jefferson's papers in a small room at the south end; from the hall came the murmur of voices and now and then a steady flow of words which showed that some member was addressing the Congress.

"They do be after talking it over, Master Ethan," said the ex-dragoon. "And it's mighty glad they all are."

"And no wonder," said Ethan Carlyle, looking up from his work with a smile. "A victory now means a great deal. Defeat has followed defeat so closely, Shamus, that they, in spite of their hopeful front, began to despair of ever seeing success crown the American arms."

"Well, they've got a murderin' big slice of success this time," said the Irish soldier, with great satisfaction. "And it's pleased I am at that same; for every true son of Erin, Master Ethan, wants to see the Saxon beat."

Ethan laughed, and there was a twinkle in his eye as he remarked:

"Why, if you dislike the British so, you old fire eater, how came you to be so taken with my poor dead father? He was an Englishman."

The old dragoon scratched his head in a rather awkward fashion, and then made reply:

"Your father was the finest gentleman I ever saw, and it was no fault of his that he was an Englishman. Sure no man can choose the country he's to first see the light in. But he showed his quality when he resigned from the English army and came to America. If he were alive and able to hold a sword and head a regiment to-day, he'd be in the thick of it for freedom and the new land, so he would."

There came a dimness to the boy's eyes and he patted the old trooper upon the back.

"You cared a very great deal for my father, didn't you, Longsword?"

"I did," said the other steadily, looking straight before him with unwinking eyes, "and I think as much of your father's son, faith."

"I know that, old friend. You've been with me through everything. You even gave up your hopes of meeting the British in battle to be with me here in Philadelphia."

"It was a hard wrench," spoke Shamus, a note of regret in his voice," but the war is not over, Master Ethan, and I have hopes that we two will see service yet."

There was some more talk of a like nature, and then Ethan went back to his work upon Mr. Jefferson's papers, while the ex-dragoon went outside the south door and paced slowly up and down in the warm sunlight. Ethan's father had been a British cavalry major who sold out and emigrated to Virginia. Upon a visit to New Orleans he met and married the daughter of a French merchant and engaged with the old man in his business. Clarette & Co. had many ships in the Gulf, and Ethan was practically raised on board of them, as

his father was continually voyaging from one place to another in search of trade. In those days the Gulf and the Caribbean swarmed with buccaneers, and every merchantman was armed and strongly manned; the ships of Clarette & Co. were often called upon to defend themselves from these rovers, and some of Ethan's most vivid recollections were of shot-swept decks and men leaping back from the cut of Shamus O'Moore's mighty brass-hilted sword.

The Irish dragoon had been his father's orderly in the English army, and had come to America with him; Major Carlyle was an Oxford man, and attended to his son's education himself while at sea; but it was the grim, hard visaged Shamus that taught him how to develop his muscles to the hardness of steel, and how to use cutlass, sabre, pike, bayonet and small-sword. The Irishman had spent years in the study of arms; his sword-play had been the marvel of the British army when he served in the Inniskillens, and had earned for him the name of "Longsword." Day by day this master of fence had drilled the boy in sword-play. But in spite of his aptness,

Ethan never drew a word of praise from Longsword, who continued to labor with him, between decks, in the dog watches, relentlessly, remorselessly, mercilessly. The boy could close his eyes in his bunk, during his watch below, and still see the angular, powerful figure of the dragoon before him ; he could see the light from the ports falling upon the scarlet scar that crossed his face, he could see the flashing of the heavy double-edged sword and the constant movement of the tireless arm. He never complained at the labor of the drill.

But one day as they were in the midst of a lesson that had lasted above an hour, Ethan in a sudden burst of impatience had refused to give way before the dragoon's heavy attack ; a desperate rally ensued, and to the astonishment of the watching sailors, the boy actually drove Shamus back before a storm of lightning-like blows. And then Longsword threw down his blade, uttered a wild Irish whoop that rang through the ship, sprang forward and clutched his pupil in a bear-like hug.

"At last!" he exulted. "Ye've done it at last. I've taught ye all I know, and I've

only been waiting to have ye use it on meself to get the feel of it. There will be no more lessons, Master Ethan; all ye need is strength and weight, and then faith, even Shamus O'Moore will be careful how he stands forninst ye!"

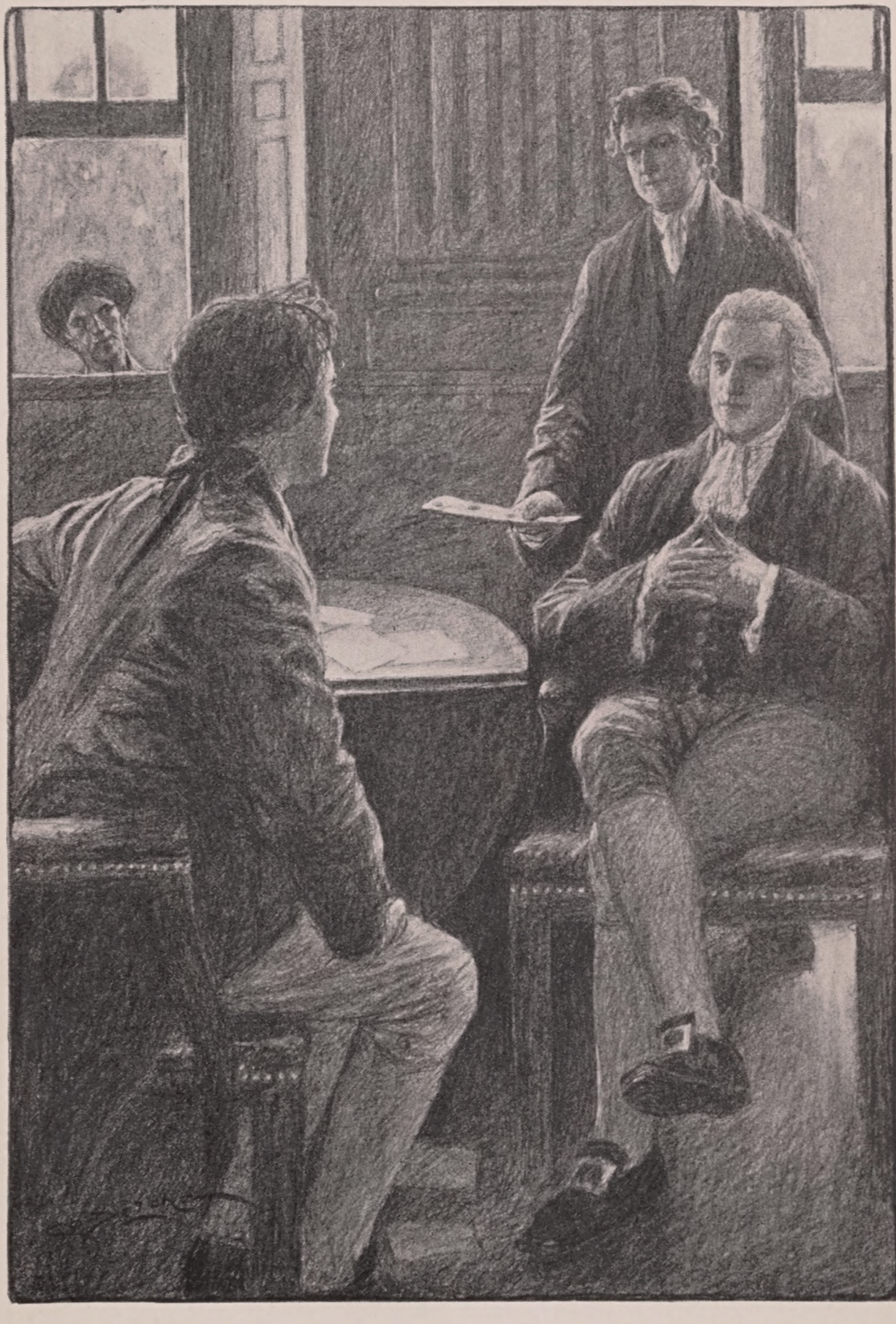
These things were running through Ethan Carlyle's head as he sorted over the papers of Mr. Jefferson. At last Congress adjourned, and the members streamed out of the building and down the quiet street. Then Mr. Jefferson and Mr. Hancock entered the room with quiet steps. The boy arose and bowed and then was about to go on with his work, when his employer said:

"Never mind that for a time, Ethan; there is something which we desire to say to you."

The lad looked at the great Virginian wonderingly; then as he and Mr. Hancock seated themselves at a table near a window, he crossed the room and stood beside them.

"Sit down," said Mr. Hancock, pointing to a chair.

The boy did so, and then the president of the Congress went on.



"I'LL DO IT," SAID ETHAN PROMPTLY

"There is a service which you can render Congress and your country if you will."

Ethan's eyes lit up.

"Then consider it done, sir, if the power to render the service rests in me."

Both the statesmen smiled; and Mr. Hancock proceeded.

"At this time there is at Portsmouth a new sloop-of-war being made ready for sea. She is called the Ranger, and is to sail under the mastership of Captain John Paul Jones."

The boy drew in his breath and the grasp of his hands tightened upon the arms of the chair. The story of the wonderful cruises of this new sea-king in the Providence and Alfred was ringing through the land; he had spread such terror by his deeds upon blue water that British merchants feared to send their vessels to sea, and British frigates were scouring the Western waters in search of him like a pack of fierce, baffled hounds.

"The Ranger is to sail for France," said Mr. Hancock, "and Captain Jones is to deliver an important document into the hands of Mr. Franklin, our commissioner in that country."

Mr. Jefferson here laid a packet, sealed with

great splotches of red wax, upon the table. As he did so there came a slight rustling among some thick bushes that grew beneath the window, and a dark, foreign looking face appeared, and a pair of burning black eyes looked into the room. So interested were the three at the table within that the man's presence was unnoticed.

"We want you to proceed to Portsmouth and deliver this packet to Captain Jones," spoke Mr. Jefferson.

"I'll do it," said Ethan promptly.

"And, further, you are to sail with him in his ship and accompany him to Paris."

"Very well, sir," answered the lad, quietly.

"As every person knows who is at all interested in the welfare of the country," said the president of Congress, "our sole hope of success in this war lies in the possibility of securing the aid of France against our enemy. But France has seen us go down in defeat after defeat; she has feared that we are not strong enough to continue the fight, and so far has refused to ally herself with us. But this victory of General Gates will put a different face upon matters. If the news that

we send here, and the secret instructions that accompany it, are placed in the hands of Mr. Franklin at Paris, the help of France and her fleets are almost assured us."

The boy's eyes gleamed as he watched the white fingers of Mr. Hancock tapping the red-sealed packet; and the dark, strange face peering in at the window was filled with an expression of triumph.

"Let the contents of these documents, however, come under the eyes of Lord North, or any other member of King George's ministry, and all would be ruined. None but the very highest British officials would understand their meaning; but these would grasp it instantly, and a condition for which we have striven for months would at once be changed, and France would find it to her disadvantage to take sides with us."

"All this means that the instructions are to be guarded carefully," said Ethan.

"As you would guard your life," said Mr. Jefferson, laying his hand upon his young secretary's shoulder.

"As my life be it," answered the boy with a resolute lift of the head.

"It will take some little time for you to reach Portsmouth," said Mr. Hancock, "and Captain Jones must be all but ready to put to sea."

"Then I go at once?"

"Yes; there is a schooner called the Island Queen which sails for Portsmouth at the next tide."

"Which will be at ten to-night," said Mr. Jefferson.

"I will be ready," returned the boy as they arose to their feet, and Mr. Hancock handed him the packet.

"No one aboard the Ranger will know of this packet but yourself and the commander," said the Virginian. "That is why we desire you to accompany the vessel; it will have another pair of eyes to watch over it."

"There will be still another pair, if O'Moore is permitted to go with me," said Ethan, anxiously.

"We had not thought of depriving you of the service of the faithful Longsword," smiled Mr. Jefferson.

As the Virginian spoke, there came a terrific

uproar from without, and Longsword's voice was heard shouting:

"You thief of the world, to be listening at daysint people's windows! Take that! and that! and that! ye bla'gard!"

And looking through the window they saw the grim dragoon tearing across the green behind the state house in pursuit of a dark, foreign looking man, while with every "and that," he aimed a vigorous kick at him.

"Listening at the window!" cried Mr. Hancock.

"A spy!" echoed Mr. Jefferson. "He must be seized!"

Ethan, at these words, shot through the door and sprang away in pursuit; he cried out to Longsword, who at once strove to lay hands upon the man. But the fugitive was a fleeter runner than either of them; full speed toward the river he went, and in a little while was lost in the alleys and winding streets of that district.

CHAPTER III

HOW THE SHALLOP ATTACKED THE ISLAND QUEEN

THE skipper of the schooner Island Queen paced his after deck and waited for the strength of the tide. There was a two masted fishing vessel tied up at the other side of the wharf; she was a clean looking craft of the type called shallop, and carried two good sized lug sails. Her captain stood upon the pier, talking to the commander of the schooner.

"You are not the only one that caught good luck at the last minute," he was saying.

"Who else has got a share of it?" asked the other.

"I have. An hour after you'd told me that you'd got a couple of passengers for Portsmouth, a man came along and engaged my vessel for a run along the coast."

"What's he going to do with her?"

"I don't know. But I'm going along; so I'll be sure that all's right."

"Money's tight in these days of war," remarked the skipper of the schooner, "but," with a shake of the head, "my boat only goes out with reg'lar cargoes and on reg'lar business. I don't like these queer cruises. I've seen strange things happen on 'em."

The captain of the shallop nodded his head and answered, soberly enough:

"You're right, cap'en; but I don't have no reg'lar cargoes, and fishing don't pay any more, with British privateers always poking their noses into the lower bay. A man must support his family, you know."

Ethan Carlyle and Longsword stood in the waist, leaning against the schooner's rail and listening to this conversation. When the skipper of the shallop crossed the pier and climbed into his own vessel, Ethan said:

"Somehow or other I don't like that."

"And why not?" asked the Irish dragoon.

"It impresses me oddly. It may be that the possession of important papers has made me nervous, but I can't help feeling that the sudden hiring of that fishing boat over there has something to do with us."

"It may be so," spoke the trooper. "Sure

that villain was not listening to what the gentlemen were saying to ye awhile ago for nothing, Master Ethan."

"He was a strange looking fellow."

"Yes; some kind of a brown man like they have in India, and far off places like that. But he was a rare good runner, though," continued Longsword with high admiration, "and I could reach him no more wid me foot after we'd gone a score of yards."

There was a brisk wind blowing down stream when the tide got its fully swing towards the sea; the skipper cast off his lines and worked the Island Queen out into the river; then the mainsail, foresail and a jib were set and the vessel headed away on her journey. As they were passing the flats below the city, Ethan, who was leaning over the stern rail with Longsword fancied that he saw a dark loom some distance toward the New Jersey shore.

"It looks like a vessel of some kind," he said to Shamus.

"Your eyes are younger nor mine," answered the trooper. "I can see nothing."

"I've been watching that for some time,"

said the mate of the schooner, who was at the wheel. "Looks to me like a two master of some sort; and she's a smart sailer, too; much faster than the Queen."

An hour passed, and the brisk wind carried the schooner well down the river; but off on her port side clung the creeping low-lying shadow that had attracted Ethan's attention. The sky was thickly overcast with clouds, the moon was hidden, and darkness hung blackly over the face of the waters.

"That craft may be a smarter sailer than the schooner," said Ethan to the mate, "but she's not showing it. She's been hanging there on that quarter all the way down."

"That's what I can't understand," said the mate. "I'm sure she could walk away from us were she so minded, but they are holding her in for some reason; they've got her out of the wind about half the time."

No more was said about the shadowy craft for some time, until they were off Reedy Island; then the skipper came on deck at the mate's request, and scanned the dark waters in search of her.

"Seems to me I do make out something,"

he said, rather anxiously. "Been following us down the river, has she?"

"Yes; and she's headed for us now," said Ethan, whose eyes were keener than his elder's. He gazed at the vessel which, sure enough, was now rapidly coming up with them; suddenly he grasped the arm of his companion. "Shamus," he breathed, "I was right."

"About what?" asked the Irish soldier.

"About the shallop. That's the same vessel."

The captain of the Island Queen turned upon the boy.

"Do you mean the shallop that lay in the dock next us?" asked he.

"I feel sure of it," answered Ethan.

The captain breathed a sigh of relief.

"Oh, then, it's all well enough. You see her captain is a friend of mine, and I suppose he wants to speak to me."

"I think," said Ethan seriously, "that you'll find that there is something more to it than that."

"And I agree wid ye," said Shamus

O'Moore; and without another word he dived below.

"Your man seems sort of nervous," laughed the captain.

"Not he," smiled Ethan. "If you spoke of nerves to him, I hardly think he'd know what you were talking about."

"He got below mighty sudden."

"He'll be back in a moment. And I fancy he'll have his tools with him."

The captain stared, but said nothing more to the lad. Scanning the waters toward the island he spoke to the mate at the wheel in low tones regarding the chart by which he was steering. They were still so engaged when the big lug sails of the shallop came plainly into view and a voice from her deck hailed hoarsely,

"Ahoy, the schooner!"

"Ahoy," answered the schooner's skipper promptly.

"Is that the Island Queen?"

"It is. What craft is that?"

"The Saucy Sue, shallop."

"Oh, is that you, Captain Hutchins?"

There was silence for a moment, then the voice replied:

"Yes; lay to; I want to come aboard of you."

"Very well," and the schooner's commander gave the order to his crew.

But Ethan stepped to his side quickly and said:

"Be careful of what you do."

The captain laughed and answered, "Oh, I see that the Irishman is not the only person aboard the Queen that's nervous. You've got a touch of that complaint yourself, my lad."

"It's not a question of nerves," said Ethan quietly. "But it's been my experience that one vessel does not hang in the wake of another for any good purpose."

"Your experience," cried the skipper good humoredly; "listen to that, Mr. Jarvis!"

The mate grinned and said:

"Sounds kind of curious to hear a boy talk like that to two old salts, don't it?"

"What experience have you had on blue water, and with mysterious craft, sonny?" asked the Queen's skipper, humorously.

"Enough to teach me not to do what

you have done," answered the boy. "Coasting is easy, steady going work enough here in these northern waters when there is no Englishman about; but I've sailed in ships that have cleared the decks for action at the beginning of a voyage, and kept them cleared except for the bodies of half breed pirates who boarded them."

The skipper looked at the mate; in the light of the compass lantern it was to be seen that that worthy had lost his grin.

"Where was that, youngster?" asked he.

"In the Gulf and West Indian waters," said Ethan. "My grandfather and my father composed the firm of Clarette & Co."

The schooner was, by this time, rocking idly upon the waters of the bay; and the shallop was drawing nearer with each moment. There was no man who followed the sea in the western world who had not heard of the great firm of Clarette & Co., shipowners, now passed out of existence; and with a quiet smile Ethan noticed the increased respect with which the captain and mate of the schooner regarded him. Just then Longsword came stamping upon deck; he had his

huge, double edged blade belted about him; in his hands he carried Ethan's sword and a couple of brace of heavy pistols.

"We are ready for them, asthore, no matter who they are," cried he as he handed the boy his weapons, drew his heavy blade and whirled it about his head with a swishing sound that caused the seamen in his neighborhood to duck their heads instinctively.

"You two are taking a great deal of pains for nothing," growled the captain. "I tell you there is no danger of any kind to be expected from that craft there. I've known her captain for years."

"Her captain, yes," said Ethan, evenly. "But you do not know the men who have engaged her from him, nor what their purpose is."

"You are right," said the captain, after a pause. "He told me only to-night that some people had chartered his vessel for a cruise of some kind. Do you reckon," and he regarded Ethan closely, "that they are after you folks?"

"I'm not at all sure," answered the lad, "but I am inclined to think that they are."

"And come to look at the thing right between the eyes," spoke the mate, "I don't think that was Captain Hutchins or any of his people that hailed us. It was a strange voice to me."

This seemed to settle the matter in the captain's mind, and whirling about he gave quick, sharp orders to get the vessel into the wind. But he was too late. The Island Queen still hung, when the smart shallop drew alongside.

"Ahoy," shouted a voice from the latter's deck. "Take care there; you'll be afoul of us."

"Then sheer off," yelled the schooner's captain.

"But we want to speak to you."

"Sheer off, I tell you," bellowed the frightened captain of the schooner, "or I'll run you down!"

"Lay that old tub to, or I'll send a couple of musket shot into your hide," shouted the voice threateningly.

"He'll be aboard of us in a minute," cried the captain.

"Have you any arms on board?" asked

Ethan quietly, as he looked to the priming of his pistols and slipped his sword in and out of the scabbard to assure himself that it was free.

"A couple of cutlasses and pikes," said the skipper; "and a brace of pistols in the cabin."

"Then get them on deck if ye love me," cried Longsword. "These are a couple of stout looking lads ye have here, and wid a few feet of cold steel in their fists they ought to do good work."

As the sides of the two vessels ground together the weapons were produced. Ethan and the Irish dragoon stationed themselves in the waist, the mate took two men armed with long handled pikes into the bow, while the captain and three others were left to defend the after deck.

No sooner had they reached these positions overlooking the shallop than a grapple was thrown aboard and fastened the two craft together.

"Bad luck to him for an impudent villain," growled Longsword, "but he goes about it in workmanlike style."

"It's not the first ship he's cut out, whoever he is," answered Ethan.

"Steady," grumbled the low-pitched voice of the swordsman. "Here they come, me jewel!"

The waist was the point at which it was chosen to board the schooner. A sharp snapping of pistols that spat redly through the darkness preceded the rush. Then a dozen active figures swarmed up the sides of the Island Queen, cutlass and pistol in hand. But bold as they appeared to be it is doubtful if they would have made the attempt had they known what awaited them upon the schooner's deck.

As they sprang upon the rail they were met with a sharp fusilade of pistol shots that sent two of their number headlong into the bay; then Ethan and the grim dragoon drew their blades and fell upon them.

The officers and crew of the Island Queen could never tell just what happened there in the schooner's waist in the dim light of the lanterns. They saw a dreadful whirl of blows, two swords that looked like circles of flame, two straining, panting, laboring figures that

seemed to carry death in their hands. Then the decks were cleared; the shallop drew off slowly, firing an occasional musket shot, while the cries of pain from her deck showed how fierce had been her crew's repulse.

"Go about after her," yelled Shamus O'Moore, "we'll board and take her, so we will!"

The officers and crew of the schooner had not struck a blow, and were very well satisfied to let matters remain as they were.

"She's getting up sail," said the skipper, peering through the darkness. "And we could never come up with her."

This was true, as Ethan saw at once; under press of the two spreading lugs the shallop was already nothing but a shadow.

"Did you make out the faces of any of them?" asked Ethan, when the Island Queen was once more under way.

"I did not," answered the trooper, as he cleaned the blade of his sword with the frayed end of a rope. "I were too busy cracking the heads of them. And when they went over the side they took all the hurted ones wid them."

There was silence between them for a moment. Ethan was loading his pistols, the ex-dragoon rubbed industriously at his blade, and the seamen hurried about their duties. Then Shamus spoke once more.

"I didn't see sorra the one of them, Master Ethan; but there is one thing I feel mortal sure of."

"And what's that, old Longsword?"

"That brown man was in that craft. He had a crooked kind of a knife and he were poking it at the ribs of me in the darkness. I didn't see him; but just the same I felt that he was there."

"I have no doubt," said Ethan gravely enough, "but what you are right. And perhaps we'll hear from him again."

CHAPTER IV

SHOWS HOW THE RANGER SAILED FOR FRANCE

BECAUSE of a succession of contrary winds the schooner Island Queen did not enter Portsmouth harbor for almost two weeks after the time she left the Delaware Capes. As they ran up under light sail, the skipper pointed to a sloop of war riding at anchor, and with a strange looking flag flying at her peak.

"That's the ship you are looking for, I think," he said.

"Yes; she seems like a new vessel," said Ethan Carlyle, gazing earnestly at the craft. "See, they are only bending her after sails."

"She's a foreigner," spoke the mate of the schooner who stood by. "Look at the flag she's flying."

"I hadn't noticed that," said the captain staring at the striped emblem with its cluster of white stars in a blue field. "It can't be the Ranger, after all, for she wouldn't be flying those colors."

Ethan looked at the flag and laughed softly, as did Shamus, who was at his side.

"Faith, then, captain, dear," said Longsword with a droll twinkle in his eye, "it's a queer thing indeed if ye don't know the flag of your own country."

"Of my own country!"

"To be sure, for I take ye to be an American."

"You are correct in that," said the skipper proudly. "But I've never seen that flag before."

"No wonder," said Ethan, "for I very much doubt if it ever flew above a ship's deck before. It is the new flag of the United States, recently adopted. I saw the first one not so long ago. Indeed, I had the honor of carrying it from the home of mistress Betsy Ross, who made it, to the State House; and I remember that the members of the Congress and General Washington, who was in the capitol at the time, admired it very much."

"Well, the design is an improvement over the old rattle-snake and pine-tree flags," admitted the captain, after careful inspection.

"It looks well when it ripples in the breeze, doesn't it?"

The schooner had drawn near the war ship, and the mate hailed her.

"Ahoy! is that the American ship, Ranger?"

"It is," came the prompt reply from the deck of the other vessel.

"We are going to send a boat to you."

"Heave ahead, my hearty."

A skiff was lowered over the schooner's stern, and Ethan and Longsword were rowed to the war ship's side and clambered to the deck.

"Well, sir," demanded a harsh looking man in the dress of a lieutenant.

"I desire to see Captain Jones, if he is aboard," said Ethan, quietly.

"The captain is very busy just now. I am Lieutenant Simpson, and will attend to any business that you may have."

There was a studied affront in the man's manner that angered Ethan; but he replied, still quietly:

"My business is with the commander of this ship in person, if you please."

"You will state your business to me, or

you go over the side," rapped out the harsh faced lieutenant.

"I will do neither one nor the other. I am here upon a special errand of much importance, and if Captain Jones is in the ship I demand to see him."

The lieutenant burst into a tirade of abuse, which made Longsword stiffen and glare menacingly with his hand upon his hilt. But just then there came a light, brisk step upon the deck and a calm voice asked,

"Mr. Simpson, what is all this ado about?"

The first officer of the Ranger colored a trifle, and turning, said:

"This boy was impudent."

"Ah! In what way?"

"He—he asked to see you."

A low laugh of amusement greeted this statement.

"Well, I must say that I see no great impudence in that." The speaker turned to Ethan, and continued: "Do you wish to speak to me?"

"Are you Captain John Paul Jones?" asked the lad.

"I am."

Ethan stared in surprise. The fame of this new and brilliant sea chief was so great that he had, somehow, expected to see a huge and formidable man with fierce, weather-beaten features and the bearing of a buccaneer. But instead he found before him a rather small, slightly-built young man with a brisk air, a pair of the keenest dark eyes in the world, and a pleasant, resolute face.

"I beg your pardon," stammered the lad, after he had recovered from his surprise and realized that he had been staring. He drew out a paper which the president of Congress had given him, and handed it to the young commander of the Ranger. The latter broke the seal, and as he unfolded the sheet of stiff paper Ethan had a glimpse of the beautifully regular handwriting of Mr. Hancock. A glance was sufficient to show John Paul Jones the purport of the missive. He glanced at Ethan in some surprise and then said:

"Will you kindly come down to my cabin?"

Ethan descended after him, and when once they were within the cabin and the door closed, the commander of the Ranger continued:

"I was expecting the packet which you bring, but hardly expected so youthful a messenger."

Ethan smiled. John Paul Jones was a gentleman who possessed the knack of manner that causes strangers to feel at their ease; and the boy replied:

"And I hardly expected to find the captain of this ship so young a man."

"Age on the sea," said John Paul Jones, humorously, "comes with experience and not with years." He regarded Ethan closely for a moment, and proceeded shrewdly, "And for all your youth, you are not a stranger to blue water, I take it."

"I made my first voyage at five," answered Ethan, "and witnessed my first sea fight through an empty port-hole. At ten I swarmed up to the royal yards of my father's ship with a musket as tall as myself and helped to beat off an Algerian corsair just off the African coast."

Captain Jones held out his hand, which the boy promptly clasped.

"Good," said the former. "I like that; and now sit down and tell me all that Mr.

Hancock and Mr. Jefferson had to say about this business."

They seated themselves at the cabin table and Ethan proceeded to relate all that the president of Congress and the great Virginian had told him. And all the while he watched the mobile face before him, and an undercurrent of thought examined the history of the sailor as he had heard it from Mr. Jefferson some months before.

John Paul Jones was born on July 6th, in the year 1747, in a cottage on the estate of Arbigland, in the county of Kirkcudbright, Scotland; and his parents had been very poor and humble people indeed. It was a stern, wild place; to the rear was a lofty and rugged mountain, to the front was the wide Solway, where as a child he could by daylight see the white sails of the ships, and by night hear the solemn strokes of their deep-toned bells. He came to love the sea with a great love; he played at being sailor when he scarce could toddle, and his favorite toys were the little ships which an elder brother would make for him.

He went to sea at the age of twelve, and at

twenty was a captain in the Scottish merchantman, John, sailing out of Whitehaven. Coming to America to settle the estate of a brother who died in Virginia he had remained, and upon the breaking out of the war between the colonies and England he had entered the infant navy as first-lieutenant of the Alfred.

When Ethan had finished he drew out the packet of papers sealed with the big splotches of red wax, and John Paul Jones locked it carefully away in a heavy, oaken chest.

"Mr. Hancock was right," said he to Ethan. "Everything depends upon an alliance with France. With the help that her heavy fleets would render us, the troops that she could send now and then, and above all the embarrassment that a war between her and England would cause the latter country, we could gain a peace with perfect freedom and honor."

They talked for some time, and then the conversation drifted upon the subject of the Ranger.

"Yes," said her captain, "she is a new ship. It was at first thought to have her carry twenty-six guns; but I saw at once that she was too slight in structure to carry so heavy

a battery, so I have mounted but eighteen six-pounders. And when I get her into a French port I'm going to make some changes that I think the trip across the Atlantic will show to be necessary."

Ethan and Shamus secured lodgings in the town until such time as the ship would sail. Much trouble was experienced in shipping a crew. The seamen demanded advance money, and the commander was forced to pay it to them out of his own private funds, as Congress sent him none for the purpose. And indeed this was no new thing for this brave and generous officer to do, as Ethan subsequently discovered. The government was already in his debt to the amount of seven thousand dollars; and he had once fitted the brig Providence for sea, paying every copper of the expense.

It was in the month of October that the Ranger, everything being ready, finally dropped down the bay and squared away for France. Ethan and Longsword were provided with sleeping quarters with the younger officer of the ship and took their meals in the gun room. Mr. Simpson and Mr. Hall the first and second officers, were grumbling, dis-

contented men, and before John Paul Jones was done with them they gave him much trouble. The third officer, Mr. Wallingford, was a pleasant, good humored young man with a fund of bright stories and much ability as a sailor.

From the first, Simpson did all he could to annoy Ethan; he had undertaken to do the same for Longsword, but the first petty act of malice in this direction brought such a long, steady, menacing stare from that grim faced trooper that the thing was not repeated.

"Mr. Simpson seems not to like me," said Ethan, on the second day out, to Mr. Wallingford.

"You are apparently a friend to Captain Jones," said the third lieutenant. "And as a man with half an eye can see, he hates the captain like poison."

"And why?"

"Just because he's the skipper, I suppose," said Wallingford, with a shrug. "Simpson is one of those men who hate all those who are placed over them. He got his rank by influence, and fancies that the command should have been given him."

"I wouldn't like to sail under him," said Ethan.

"It is rather a good thing that you don't belong to the ship," agreed Wallingford. "He'd make life a burden for you, if you did."

"And not belonging to the ship I have a right to resent insult even from the first lieutenant," said Ethan Carlyle. "And if Mr. Simpson continues as he has he'll find that I know how."

Wallingford glanced over the lithe, supple, springy young fellow and realized that these words were no idle vaporings and that the power and will were behind them to make them good.

"Perhaps you may have a chance to show what you can do in the fighting way before we reach Nantes," said the young third lieutenant. "I heard Simpson among the middies at eight bells last night trying to get one of them to thrash you."

Ethan's eyes flashed and his hands clinched.

"I trust he didn't succeed," said he. "For the midshipmen of the Ranger struck me as being a rather decent lot."

"They are," said Wallingford. "And none of them would accept his hints. But he didn't stop there. There is a Canadian master's mate on board, a hulking, savage sort of fellow. Simpson has been talking to him; so you'd better look out unless you want to complain to the skipper."

"I'll not do that," answered Ethan determinedly. "I've always fought my own battles, and mean to continue to do so."

"I think he—Simpson, I mean—judged you to be one of that kind, and he's just mean enough to take advantage of it."

Ethan told Shamus of this that same evening as they paced the deck together.

"The master's mate, is it?" said the dragoon. "Well, I've noticed that same fellow to-day as he kicked and swore at the small lads and mild looking men in the crew. He's a stout lump of a fellow wid a wicked look, so if there is to be ructions wid him, Master Ethan, leave him to me, and I'll engage not to leave a whole bone in his body, so I will."

Ethan laughed at his companion's enthusiasm, but replied,

"I'd very much prefer it were Simpson

himself, if it comes to a fight; but of course that is out of the question on board; it would not do for the first officer upon an American sloop-of-war to engage in a fracas with a passenger; Captain Jones would not permit it."

As they were, shortly afterward, about to go below for the night, Shamus laid his hand upon Ethan's arm.

"Master Ethan," said he, "I'm going to tell ye something that will surprise ye."

Ethan looked into the grim, scarred face of Longsword and was astonished to see that it was anxious and troubled looking.

"What is it?" he asked.

"In the second dog watch I came on deck," said the Irishman, "and the first person me two eyes fell upon as I took me foot from the top step of the ladder was—guess?"

"I can't."

"It was the brown man that listened at the window."

"Impossible!"

"That's what I should have said meself, jewel, if I hadn't seen him as plain as day. And he had the crooked knife in his belt that

I imagined him wid the other night on the Island Queen."

"Are you quite positive it was the same man?"

"I'm as sure of it as I am that I am talking wid ye at this minute."

"But what is he doing on the Ranger?"

"Sure he's a sailor, so he is; the bos'en told me that he shipped on the day we sailed."

Next day Ethan questioned Wallingford.

"A brown fellow, eh?" mused the ship's third officer. "Let me see! Oh, yes, I remember. He's a Lascar, I think, and gave the name of Siki. I signed him and the master's mate whom I told you about yesterday. They seem to be great cronies. Always to be found in odd corners, whispering away like all possessed."

Ethan waited until he saw the Lascar with his own eyes before he was satisfied. Then he went to Captain Jones, and told him all that he knew about the man.

"So you think that this fellow, Siki, as he calls himself, had something to do with the attack upon the schooner in Delaware Bay?" said the commander sternly.

"I feel sure of it, sir; though of course I did not see him."

"And you think that he was after the packet given you by Mr. Hancock?"

"I think so—yes."

"Then he also shipped with us in the hope of still getting his hands upon it, somehow. I'll have Simpson clap the villain in irons."

Ethan hastily laid his hand upon the captain's arm.

"See," said he, pointing to the after battery, where the tawny Lascar was busying himself rubbing down one of the six pounders under the direction of the gunner's mate, "there he is, now. And I hardly think he's the prime mover in the matter."

"No," said John Paul Jones, "it does not seem likely. He is more apt to be a subtle, deft-handed instrument, used by a superior mind."

"Would it not be wise," suggested Ethan, "for you to hold your hand a bit longer; we might also be able to capture the master as well as the man."

The commander patted him on the shoulder approvingly.

"Excellent," said he, nodding his head. "That is just what we will do. The Lascar can be laid by the heels any time we choose to do it; it's the mysterious fellow in the shadow that is the dangerous one. We will leave the trap open—and we will wait for him to show himself."

CHAPTER V

HOW ETHAN CARLYLE FACED THE BULLY OF THE RANGER

THE knowledge displayed by Ethan in the working of a ship during the first week out, and his ready courage in the taking of a couple of British prizes, won the regard of the Ranger's tars, and he was ever a welcome visitor to the forecastle when he chose to go there. Many were the yarns they told him of voyages with Barry, Murray, Whipple and other hearts of oak; and many were those he told in return of strange seas, strange ports and stranger people.

He had finished telling of an adventure in the China Sea in his grandfather's ship, Warlock; and during the appreciative pause that followed, the silence was rudely broken by a loud, sneering laugh.

"He pulls a long bow for a youngster," said a voice; "and you seasoned tars sit around

and draw it in like sucking pigs their mammy's milk."

Ethan flushed scarlet, and a murmur went up from the watch below. But it was the master's mate that spoke, a huge-chested Canadian named Blake; and no one among the seamen dared to resent his words, for in his week among them he had, by his ruffianism, cowed them all. A few, at the beginning, had dared to defy him; but his brawny fists had soon beaten them into submission. Indeed, by this time, the forecastle had come to be a sort of grill upon which the bully toasted his shipmates one after the other and laughed at their helpless squirming.

Ethan made no reply to the man's remark. Longsword, who sat with his broad back against the heel of the bowsprit, grew crimson, and two sharp points of light shot into his eyes; but he made no movement; since the death of Ethan's father he had come to look upon the lad as his superior officer, and so strong was the military idea fixed in his mind that he never took an important step without orders.

The master's mate took a seat upon an up-

turned tub and regarded his mates with a sneering smile.

"It's amusing," said he, "to stand and watch you taking in all the plum duff that this boy gives you. I suppose," with a significant laugh, "you're duty bound to do it because he's a friend to the skipper."

Still there was no reply; Ethan sat still, never even glancing at the man; the seamen shifted uneasily in their places; they felt assured that the bully meant to pick a quarrel with Ethan, and while they did not like it, his demeanor had so awed them that they dared not interfere. Blake seemed to have mapped out his plan of action well in advance, and proceeded.

"It may be an honor to be a friend to a captain, but I don't know. What sort of captains have you in this American navy of yours? I've sailed in British ships, and I tell you they wouldn't let your skippers swab the quarter deck."

Still he got no answer, thcugh there was no lack of scowling looks directed at him.

"And this Captain Jones," he went on, his face alive with malice, "was one time named

Paul, I hear, just plain John Paul. He was drove out of the British merchant service for killing a sailor by flogging, and he come to America and changed his name."

Ethan had come to admire John Paul Jones greatly since he came aboard the Ranger, and this repetition of an old slander aroused him at once.

"If you know anything about the matter at all," said he quietly, "you know that what you say is false!"

"What's that?" shouted the bully, leaping to his feet.

"I said it was false. It was a thing invented by his enemies; when he defied them and invited them to prove it, they feared to come forward."

"Maybe," spoke the master's mate, folding his thick arms across his bulging chest, "you think that I am afraid to come forward, as you call it."

"It seems to me," said Ethan as he rose slowly to his feet, "that you are too ready to bluster and bully people whom you think will not fight." His voice had been low and his movements of the most deliberate as he said

this. Then suddenly his manner changed; like a flash he stripped off his woolen shirt and cried, sharply: "Get ready; I'm going to make you prove what you've said."

Longsword came to his feet like a shot, and two long strides took him to Ethan's side. The boy's bared body gleamed like satin under the glare of the ship's lanterns, and the strong fingers of the Irish trooper at once began kneading the long, supple muscles of the arms, chest and back and performing other services that his years of experience told him would be of benefit.

Blake stood, for a moment, dumbfounded, unable to credit his eyes; there was a clattering of draught boards as sailors who had been playing sprung up, a hissing of sharply indrawn breath, and then a ring of human bodies formed in a twinkling; a circle of tense faces showed the interest that was excited in the breasts of all.

The master's mate was slow of brain; but when he at last realized that a combat was inevitable, he manifested much savage satisfaction.

"I've got you safe now," said he, as he

stripped off his shirt in turn. "And I'll beat you so badly that you'll think keel-hauling is play in comparison."

"You'll never beat him by talking about it, my bucko," said Longsword, grimly, still grooming his principal in a very workmanlike manner.

In a moment the two had faced each other. The bulk of the Canadian seaman and the slenderness of the young American were now, more than ever, evident. But Blake was muscle bound, ponderous in his movements and scant of wind; nevertheless he was a formidable foe, for his bulk suggested power, and his cruel expression denoted a merciless nature.

Ethan's frame was strong, but needed the filling that years would bring; his muscles, thanks to the effort of Longsword, were those of a trained athlete, but when compared with the bully he looked almost frail.

The watch below noted all this; they also saw the panther-like grace with which the lad advanced to the centre of the human ring, and marked the lumbering movements of Blake as he did likewise.

"Mind yourself," warned the Irish dragoon as he sent his man forward. "Don't let him clinch. He'll have ye then, Master Ethan."

The two met in the centre and raised their guards. Ethan's was free, swinging and low; Blake's was high and held as rigid as iron. With short cat-like steps Ethan wove in and out; the bully watched him narrowly; the regular opening and closing of his hands showed that he was meditating a rush—a grapple—and then Ethan would be at his mercy. The great weight of the man must crush the slighter boy to the deck.

Around and around crept the soft-footed young athlete; Blake wheeled constantly to face him, still holding his high, rigid guard. Suddenly the man's bulging muscles grew tense; Ethan knew that another moment would bring the expected rush; with the speed of lightning his right shot out and landed a smashing blow in the other's wind; then he went dancing away, a smile upon his lips. The lad continued to follow these tactics. Every time Blake stepped in to clinch, Ethan's left hand would dart in a quick stab. Each succeeding failure to get within reach made

Blake more and more ferocious; the lad's tantalizing smile, and Longsword's words of advice, served to almost madden him.

He began to make savage, bull-like rushes; his thick arms thrashed like flails. Laughter came from the watch below as he failed again and yet again. Ethan had expected much more from his huge opponent; a growing contempt took possession of him; he began to step in and out with little or no caution; his second called to him frantically to be careful, but he paid no heed.

A gleam of cunning shot through the brain of the panting giant; he drew in his breath in gasps; his movements were labored; his knees seemed to quiver beneath him.

"Finish him," came the cry from the sailors, delighting in the bully's defeat.

Longsword shouted his warnings madly, but Ethan was after his foe like a flash, and driving in short, jarring blows with all the power of his athletic young body. Suddenly Blake's burly form stiffened and lurched forward; his great arms whirled, and one brawny fist landed with terrific force upon Ethan's body. It was his first blow of the battle.

Ethan went white and swayed weakly, his hands groping blindly. With a savage grin Blake dashed at him.

"Down," yelled Longsword desperately. The reeling brain of the sorely hurt boy just managed to grasp the meaning of this advice, and he sank to his knees just in time to escape the shattering blow that passed above his head.

"Stand off," snarled the Irish dragoon as he worked like mad over his pupil. He turned his face to glare over his shoulder at Blake, and the great scar across it seemed to burn like fire.

A friendly hand dashed cold water over Ethan's bare back; the shock cleared the lad's head, and clinging to Longsword he regained his feet, his breath wheezing in his throat, his chest laboring in great spasmodic sobs.

At this point the ring at the side nearest the forecastle hatch opened and Captain Paul Jones appeared; behind him showed the face of Lieutenant Simpson, wrinkled with malicious satisfaction. The commander half raised his hand for a gesture that would have stopped the combat; but he paused, hesitated; then

he caught the appeal in Ethan's wide open eyes. He nodded quickly. The crowd drew a breath of relief. The fight was to go on.

Longsword sluiced more water over his charge, taking care to stand between him and his opponent, so as to give him the benefit of every second's delay.

"Stand out of the way," raved Blake. "Play fair, there!"

"Fair play," came from all hands. They almost to a man desired to see Blake defeated; but it must be done fairly. Ethan shoved Shamus aside and faced his foe once more, pale and perceptibly weak.

The bully rushed, but Ethan evaded him. With each passing moment the boy felt the glow of fresh life stealing through his numbed limbs, and to avoid the heavy plunges of Blake grew easy once more. He began again to rock the other's head with his straight shoulder drives. But, for all this, he found himself, little by little, being driven back to the side of the ring, Blake pressing eagerly after him. Now and then Ethan would dart in a stinging hit; the man would shake his head in a bull-like motion, but still come on.

At length the lad could retreat no farther; he was preparing to feint and dart aside when he stumbled over an outstretched foot. He shouted for those behind him to take notice, and then stumbled again. There came an answering cry from the vigilant Longsword, who hurled himself across the ring and struck down the Lascar, Siki, whose treacherous foot was stretched into Ethan's way.

The young American's attention was taken by this incident for a moment; then Blake came driving at him like a bison; Ethan was penned up, his back to the throng of seamen, with no hope of escape by his usual tactics of retreat.

So he braced himself and met the rush with all the power of his square young shoulders. Once, twice, thrice he struck, throwing his head from side to side to avoid the swinging hits of the other. Then, suddenly, he felt Blake's big body give before his blows; the next instant he was standing gazing with dazed eyes, at the prostrate form of the Ranger's bully as he lay, with wide flung arms, upon the deck.

CHAPTER VI

WHAT HAPPENED BY NIGHT IN THE HARBOR OF NANTES

On the evening of December 2d, the Ranger's cut-water sundered the ripples of Nantes harbor for the first time, and finding a safe and convenient anchorage, Captain Jones ordered the bow anchors let go and the ship stripped.

It was a middy who had informed the commander of what was going forward in the forecastle upon the night of Ethan Carlyle's encounter with Blake. After much persuasion Ethan was induced to tell the cause of the struggle. The captain listened with wrinkled brows.

"It was Simpson who told the man that," said he at length. "He dislikes me and takes no pains to conceal it. Before long he'll have the crew demoralized. When an officer sets the example of insubordination the ship's company rapidly follow in his wake."

That night in the French harbor, the officer paced his quarter-deck with Ethan by his side. All was quiet; the gleam of ships' lamps shot thinly across the dark waters; the low murmurous sound of the seamen came from the forward part of the vessel. The three lieutenants and some of the crew had gone ashore. Next day the commander, Ethan and Longsword were to start for Paris with the secret instructions for Benjamin Franklin.

Ethan saw that a cloud was upon the spirit of the great seaman, so he did not speak; at last the officer himself broke the silence.

"I have not yet thanked you," said he. "But I do so now."

"Thanked me," exclaimed Ethan, in surprise.

"For defending my good name, I mean. I have had many enemies, my lad, and few friends; it is comforting to think that I have gained a new one."

"I should think," said Ethan, after a pause, "that one like you would have no lack of friends. There is not an American worthy of the title but what pronounces the name of

John Paul Jones with admiration. You are known in every hamlet and town throughout the colonies; your deeds upon the sea in the cause of liberty are upon every lip."

The moody captain smiled and patted his young companion upon the shoulder kindly.

"It's kind of you to say this; and I appreciate it all the more because I know that you mean it. But fame does not always bring content, my boy, nor friends. Two years ago I should have been proud of the command of a ship like this, now I aspire to command fleets; and then, again, I sometimes catch myself wondering if the people who seem glad to grasp the hand of John Paul Jones, victor in some sea fights, would have been equally glad to have greeted plain John Paul, emigrant."

Ethan shook his head.

"I suppose not," he answered.

They continued talking in this strain for some time. Longsword came on deck after a time and also began to pace slowly up and down, in the waist. At length the subject shifted to the secret instructions of Congress.

"There does not seem to be any one in the

ship," said Ethan, "who is at all familiar with the Lascar but Blake."

"And he is not the master mind, that's sure," smiled the captain. "Siki is of greater intelligence by far."

"The man who sent him to steal the secret dispatch is not in the vessel," decided Ethan, who had thought much upon this point during the run across.

"My own conclusion exactly," said the commander. "As like as not the directing mind of the plot will turn up there," and he waved his hand toward the city. "But," with a short laugh, "he will hear nothing of his agent, nor will he secure the coveted document. Before dawn Siki will be in irons; and the papers are safe in the strong box in my cabin."

"I noted the sentry at the cabin door all the way out," said Ethan approvingly. "And I suppose you examined the chest frequently?"

"Twice a day, to see that it was not tampered with. And the sentries were, in every instance, men whom I could trust."

Here one of the middies advanced and drew

the commander's attention to something forward. Ethan joined Longsword in the waist.

"We start to-morrow, then?" said the trooper.

"Yes; after daybreak. Lieutenant Wallingford has procured us horses, so there will be no delay."

"It seems to me, Master Ethan," grumbled Longsword, ill-humoredly, "that the captain is making a great mistake."

"In what respect?"

"In not keeping guard over the cabin door. When we were in mid-ocean and no man could escape he were very strict in that way; but now when there is a chance for some bla'guard to steal the secret and swim ashore, it's leave the cabin unguarded he do be after doing."

"Unguarded!"

"I passed there not five minutes ago. There were no one in sight and the place was in darkness. I lit the lamp in the companionway and looked about, for sure I had me suspicions. But there was no one in sight, good or bad."

"That is very strange," said Ethan. "I

was just now speaking to the captain about that very point and understood that the sentry was still a fixture at the cabin door."

He paused a moment, hesitating; then he said quietly:

"I will return in a moment."

With quick steps he advanced to the companionway and descended.

"Dark!" he muttered, as his eyes tried vainly to pierce the blackness. "And Shamus said he had lit the lamp. This looks strange. Why it would almost seem that some one had" —he caught his breath at the thought— "blown it out."

Creeping along in the darkness toward the commander's cabin, his groping hands found the door.

It was open!

He paused, standing upright, unable to think what next to do. Then his ears caught a slight, unmistakable rustling.

"Who's there?" he called sharply.

There was no response. The rustling ceased. For a moment he listened intently, then advanced boldly into the cabin.

"There is some one here," he said, clearly.

"You might as well acknowledge yourself now as later."

Scarcely had the words left his mouth than he was thrown violently aside, and a form rushed past him through the doorway and up the companion ladder.

Ethan shouted a warning to the deck as he scrambled up. Quick footsteps sounded from above, then a sharp cry, and a heavy report.

When he gained the deck, he saw Captain Jones, pale of face and with a trickle of blood coming from his forehead, leaning against a gun. The Irish dragoon stood by the taprail, blowing the smoke from the long barrel of a pistol and peering downward into the waters of the harbor.

"He's overboard, sir," spoke Shamus, quietly.

A quick-witted middy had given the word to lower a boat; and when a few moments later this pulled away in search of the daring swimmer, Ethan and Longsword followed the commander below.

The companionway lamp was lighted once more, and a search showed the sentry senseless beneath a piece of sail cloth. The lock

of the cabin door was broken, but the strong box was securely fastened.

"I'll open it and make sure," said Captain Jones.

When the lid was thrown back, the first object that struck their eyes was a sealed packet; and they drew long sighs of relief.

"You interrupted him before he could complete his work," said the commander after he had heard the statements of the two. "Doubtless he had overpowered the sentry and had not yet forced the door when O'Moore came along and re-lit the lamp. Then when left alone once more he broke in, extinguished the light and was searching for the papers with the aid of this," holding up the stump of a tallow candle, "when he was interrupted the second time. He was a daring villain, and another five minutes would have sufficed him."

Returning to the deck, after re-locking the chest and placing two men under charge of a midshipman to guard the cabin, they found that the boat had returned.

"He's either got well off or been drowned,

sir," reported the middy in command. "We could see nothing of him."

"Pipe all hands on deck," directed John Paul Jones.

The boatswain's call rang through the ship and soon the crew were assembled. When Blake's name was called in the roll a man answered :

"Gone ashore, sir, on leave."

The finish of the roll call showed only one man unaccounted for. That was the Lascar, Siki. When the men had been dismissed, the captain turned to Ethan and said gravely :

"It is just as I expected. It was the Lascar, and the chances are that he is safely ashore at this moment."

"And making ready to treat us to another surprise, I have no doubt."

"We shall hear from him again, rest assured. It seems to me that the ride from Nantes to Paris may prove a very eventful one."

CHAPTER VII

HOW LONGSWORD STRUCK HOME

SHORTLY after daybreak next morning John Paul Jones left the Ranger in charge of his first officer, who had come on board; and then he and Ethan and Longsword took horse and started upon the road to Paris.

"The French seem hungry for news," said Captain Jones, as they rode along.

"I suppose the British ministry has received tidings of Burgoyne's disaster before this," said Ethan. "It will set them in a panic when it does come, anyway, and they'll be ready to grant some concessions, I dare say."

"Nothing succeeds like success," remarked the captain of the Ranger. "For a nation to be free she must first be strong and show a disposition to use her strength."

"I don't think," spoke the boy shrewdly, "that this turn of affairs will hurt the hoped-for alliance with France. I fancy that France has held off as much through desire not to

commit herself as anything else. The loss of the great colonies across the sea would weaken England; and France wants her weakened. Rather than see a peace made with the states still as colonies and a source of strength to her foe, France will cast her sword into the scale and it will be in our favor."

"A good thought," smiled the captain. "You have not sat at the feet of Mr. Jefferson for nothing, I see."

"Mr. Jefferson is a great man," replied Ethan.

"A very great man," returned John Paul Jones. "It takes a crisis like this present one to bring out the quality of a people; and then the temper of a few is bound to ring true."

The horses upon which they were mounted were good ones and they put the miles behind them rapidly.

"This country of France," observed Captain Jones during the course of the day, "is a fine one, but the people of the peasant class seem an overworked, underfed lot."

"They do indeed," agreed Ethan. "Look at that group there," pointing to an aged

man, a young woman, apparently his daughter, and a few children, who stood together in a cottage door to see them ride by. "There has been little else but want and gloom in those lives, I'll venture to say. Freedom is not worshiped here, no matter how much the French say they admire the desire for it in us."

"I always thought," observed Longsword as they passed a row of miserable huts, "that the poor people of Ireland were the worst housed in the world. But, faith, the French beat them. Sure a Galway beggar would turn up the nose of him at a house like one of those."

"The people seem to lack spirit, too," observed Ethan. "They are sullen and lowering in their looks sometimes, but they have the appearance of having given up all hope of betterment, long ago."

"I don't think they ever possessed even the shadow of a hope," said the captain, "nor their fathers nor grandfathers before them, for that matter. However, a betterment will come some day; and then let the gilded idlers, who crushed this people into

the earth and brutalized them so, beware! That day will dawn red, I think, and will leave a gory mark upon the pages of history."

Evening had already come on when they halted at an inn and applied for accommodations. The landlord was a small ferret of a man with a furtive manner and a sidelong look; he received them with smiles, but his little red eyes seemed to be calculating how much they would willingly pay for supper and lodgings.

"The groom will take your horses, monsieurs," fawned he, as a stout looking lout came forward, from a tumble down building with a rotten looking roof of thatch. "He will feed them corn, monsieurs, and give them dry beds and a rubbing that will make them feel like colts."

"I've seen better-favored fellows than this spalpeen run away wid a horse before now," remarked Longsword, who knew no French, and only understood what was being said by the movements of the others. "Do you think we'd better trust them to him, Master Ethan?"

"Oh, I suppose so," said Ethan. "They'll be safe enough."

"I don't believe they have a bed in the place that's fit to sleep on," grumbled the old dragoon, as they entered the inn. "And look at that little fox of a fellow wid his smirks and his smiles. Faith, I'll see to me bit of money while I'm here, so I will. I never yet trusted one of these sugary villains that ye meet by the roadside. He may be the biggest thief in all France for all we know."

John Paul Jones laughed good humoredly at this.

"Well, O'Moore," said he, "it's fortunate that our host does not understand English; he'd not be at all flattered at your estimate of him, could he do so."

The food provided them was poor, coarse and ill served. The landlord hovered about while they ate and told them what a splendid place the inn was when his grandfather was its owner.

"It's sorry enough I am," remarked Longsword as he looked with distaste at the piece of sour, black bread which he held in his hand, "that your grandfather is not here to

see how you are ruining the reputation he worked so hard for. Sure this bread was made widout salt, and the grain must have been mixed wid sawdust and gravel."

Ethan had translated the landlord's remarks for the Irishman's benefit; the ferret-like Frenchman seemed to understand that Shamus was not pleased with the fare, and proceeded:

"In the old days, monsieurs, the 'Burgundian King' was most magnificent! But that was when this road was used by the nobles in their grand chariots. For a slight service they would fling one a golden Louis as round as that," drawing a circle in the palm of one hand with the forefinger of the other. "And the 'King' was in good repair and very much larger than it is now. At times, monsieurs, and I tell you no falsehood, we've had dukes and princes of the blood sleep under this roof."

The host waited for some expression of wonderment at this news; but as none came he ceased; and a short time later the three withdrew into a smaller room in which a good fire was burning.

Through the open door Longsword could see the landlord and his people moving about their affairs ; he fancied that he caught them whispering and casting sidelong looks now and then, and began to feel troubled for the safety of the horses. At last he could stand it no longer and arose to his feet.

"I believe," said he, "I'll go out and give an eye to the cattle. Something tells me that they are not as safe as they might be."

"Oh, I wouldn't trouble, Shamus, if I were you," said Ethan. "They'll do very well out there. You're prejudiced against these poor people, that's all."

"It's not their poverty that prejudices me against them, then. It's their looks and their ways. I've come across thieving rogues a-plenty in my time, sir, and these have the same look, so they have—and worse."

Captain Jones and Ethan sat for some time engaged in conversation relating to the struggle for independence ; they had been at the inn for some hours and the night had fallen long since, black and complete. As they talked they caught the sound of hoofs approaching along the road toward the hostelry.

"More guests," said the captain, crossing his legs comfortably before the fire, and enjoying the pleasant warmth.

The host and his helpers seemed surprised; two parties of travelers to stop at the Burgundian King in one evening was an unusual thing, indeed. In a short time the arriving horsemen had dismounted, been bidden welcome, and came stamping into the supper room. The night was cold and had turned to snow. The men wore heavy cloaks wound about them and fur caps pulled low over their eyes; they crossed to a side of the room which was not swept by the door of the inner room, and here removed their mufflings.

"A cold night, landlord," said one of them, in perfect French.

"It is, indeed, monsieur," answered the host of the Burgundian King. "And it is growing colder."

"We'd like supper and beds," said the guest.

"Yes, monsieur, with great pleasure. We are rather crowded to-night, but the King can accommodate you, I'm sure."

Supper was provided for the newcomers, and they ate it with much low grumbling.

"O'Moore would be pleased to hear that," smiled Ethan.

"No doubt," answered the captain. "But listen."

He held up one warning finger and bent forward so that he might be able to hear the better. The conversation between those in the other room was very low; but Ethan fancied that now and then he detected an English expression.

"Why," whispered he, "they seem to be talking English."

"That is what I thought," said the captain. "Can you make out what they are saying?"

Ethan listened for a moment, then shook his head.

"No," said he. "But oddly enough I imagine that I recognize familiar voices among them. There, do you hear that one rather lighter than the rest? It sounds to me something like the voice of a boy whom I knew in Philadelphia. His name was Wheelock, and his family were Tories."

John Paul Jones appeared to be greatly interested.

"I had fancied the same thing myself," ad-

mitted he. "There is one voice among them that I've thought sounded strangely like—whom do you think?"

Ethan leaned over and grasped his arm tightly.

"Not Blake!" whispered he.

The captain of the Ranger nodded.

"Yes, Blake," he answered. "Then you too, have thought the same! It must be he."

"I'll see in a moment," and the boy started to his feet.

"Sit down," said John Paul Jones. "Before we betray our presence here let us consider what it might mean."

"You are right, sir." Ethan took his seat once more, and waited for the other to go on.

"I think we spoke of a directing mind that Siki would probably meet in France—the plotter that commanded him to enlist on the Ranger and endeavor to steal the secret dispatch.

"We did."

"I think that the Lascar and his master have met, and that they have not yet given up hope of succeeding."

Just then a voice from the supper room spoke out sharp and full.

"Siki did well, Blake. And if you had given him any aid my plans would have carried."

"You see," whispered John Paul Jones, "I am right. Siki is there, and that was the voice of the master."

Blake was heard to grumble out some reply; but the other man silenced him instantly.

"That will do," said he. "Excuses will not answer at this stage of the proceedings. To put yourself back in my good graces you must do more than invent reasons why you failed in your part of the plan. Rather than remain and guard the way against the surprise which came, you went ashore, and so ruined all."

"Oh, very well," grumbled Blake, "put it all on me, if you will."

"You are the one to bear the blame, and bear it you shall. Unless you do something that will lead to our securing this secret paper, you shall not receive a shilling of that which I promised you."

"A bargain's a bargain," said Blake.

"And good faith is good faith," said the other man.

"You are right, Danvers," said a boy's voice.

"You keep still, you pup," growled Blake. "I don't see what good you are in this, anyway."

"It was my father that found out about the paper and sent for Danvers to come to Philadelphia so that he might be able to get his hands on it. Isn't that so, Danvers?"

"Yes," replied Danvers. "The information given me was correct, and if the paper is found you get your full share of the reward."

"I've done all I could to make up for any little lapses which I might have made," whined Blake. "Only for me you wouldn't have known that Captain Jones came this way."

Ethan felt a strong pressure upon his arm, and turning found the commander of the Ranger staring into his face from under frowning brows.

"They have followed us," said he. "And they intend to stop at nothing that will bring them success."

"They realize the value of the papers, or this man Danvers does, at least; and there is a reward offered, it seems, for their delivery to the proper persons."

"This boy who just now spoke," said Captain Jones, "you said you knew him, did you not? and that he was of a Tory family?"

"Yes; his name is Wheelock."

"There must be a leak somewhere, when a Tory could get wind of so secret a document in time to place himself in communication with an emissary of the crown. But as matters stand there is only one thing to do; if we cannot avoid them, we must fight them! The papers must reach the hands of Mr. Franklin without accident."

As he spoke the commander of the Ranger drew his sword around so that it would be nearer his hand and looked to the priming of the pistol which he carried in his belt. Ethan did likewise, and then they sat silently before the fire, listening, and waiting for whatever might happen. The voices of those in the supper-room sank lower for a time and the

two could not make out what was being said. At length, however, Blake cried :

"I tell you they can't be very far ahead. If this snow had not come up we would have overtaken them."

"Perhaps," suggested Stephen Wheelock, "they might even have stopped here to-night."

Silence followed this—a silence that showed the interest which the remark caused among the newcomers.

"Landlord," called Danvers, at last.

"Yes, monsieur," quickly responded that individual, crossing the room.

"Have you seen anything of any travelers to-night?"

"Only the gentlemen who stopped here, monsieurs."

"Stopped here! Ah!"

Captain Jones and Ethan Carlyle heard a sudden drawing back of stools and a chorus of sharp, breathless exclamations.

"So," continued Danvers, in a slightly lower tone, "some travelers stopped here to-night, did they?"

"They did, monsieur, very fine gentlemen indeed. They honored my poor house by breaking bread in it, and eating of my excellent potato soup."

"And when did they leave?"

"Leave, monsieur! They have not left. There are two of the gentlemen in the very next room."

There was a sound as though a single person had arisen; then footsteps slowly crossed the floor, and in a moment a tall, fine looking man with black hair, and a face of remarkable paleness, stood in the doorway and regarded the two occupants of the smaller room fixedly. There was a calm insolence in his air that was peculiarly exasperating, and Captain Paul Jones rapped out in a peppery tone,

"I trust, sir, that this inspection is affording you as much satisfaction as it is us discomfort."

"Your name, sir," demanded the man with great coolness.

"My name is my own," returned John Paul Jones, "and I don't choose to give it to every fellow that asks it in a public house."

The man turned and beckoned; in a moment the burly form of Blake was at his side.

"Is this the captain and the boy of whom you spoke?" asked he.

"Yes, it is, Mr. Danvers," replied Blake, scowling blackly, to hide his embarrassment. He did not like the look in his captain's eye.

"So, sir," cried the latter, "I find you here, do I? Your leave ashore was for fifteen hours only."

"My leave ashore is for good, as far as your old barkee goes," growled the Canadian sailor.

"You have deserted, then?" inquired the officer, regarding him intently.

"Call it what you like," said Blake. "It all comes to the same thing."

Here Danvers signed for the seaman to go back into the supper room; when the man had done so the emissary of the British government advanced calmly to the fire.

"I would scarcely style Blake's little escapade desertion," spoke he, easily, as he held his white, strong-looking hands over the blaze.

"You see, he entered on the books of your ship at my request. It was only intended that he should sail with you to Nantes."

"I am quite aware of that," answered John Paul Jones, leaning back in his chair and clasping his hands behind his head.

The Englishman seemed surprised.

"Indeed!" said he.

"I am also aware that the Lascar, Siki, was in your pay."

"You are a person of considerable penetration," said Danvers, bowing politely.

"Not at all. It requires no keenness of wit to overhear a noisy conversation at an inn. I should have credited the government of Lord North with more circumspection in the choice of an agent, really."

The pallor of Danvers disappeared before a sudden flush of resentment; then he laughed.

"A rather good hit," commented he, with his white teeth showing. "I fancied that you might have overheard what was said, when I learned that you were here."

Captain Jones crossed his legs and tapped the toe of his boot with his brass-tipped scabbard.

"KEEP THEM AT SWORD'S LENGTH," SAID CAPTAIN JONES

"You were in quest of a certain document, were you not?" asked he.

"I was," admitted Danvers. "And to be perfectly candid in the matter and avoid mistakes, I am so still."

"Is there any possibility, do you think, of your securing possession of it?"

This question was asked in a calm matter-of-fact tone that made Ethan open his eyes. But Danvers heard it with a self-possession that was perfect.

"Oh, yes," he replied, "there are only two of you ——"

"Three," corrected Captain Jones.

"And there are four of us," continued Danvers. Then he made as though to seat himself in a vacant chair by the fire; but Ethan toppled it over with his foot, and the man stood glaring at him angrily.

"I think," said the young American, quietly, "that you had better stand."

"Ah! You are the fighting lad who made such sad work of Blake, I take it." Danvers favored the boy with an unpleasant smile. "Well, perhaps you may have an opportunity of using your talent before long."

L OF C.

Then he turned to Captain Jones, and demanded:

"Will you give up the document, peaceably?"

"The papers are for Dr. Franklin," answered the commander of the Ranger, "and not for a British spy!"

Danvers whipped out the sword that he carried and shouted:

"Blake! Siki! Wheelock! This way!"

In response to this call the three persons named darted into the room; Ethan and the captain leaped up and their blades flashed in the lamplight, while the chairs in which they had been seated went crashing to the floor upon the far side. The landlord and his servants also pressed into the room; it was plain that strife was no new thing within the walls of the Burgundian King, for each of them had a stout cudgel, and only seemed to hesitate as to which party they should side with. Danvers saw this at a glance and cried,

"Landlord, a dozen Louis d'or if you give me your help against these robbers."

"It is done, monsieur," answered the landlord promptly.

"Keep them at sword's length," said Captain Jones, in a low voice.

"Right, sir," answered Ethan.

The next instant four swords and a few stout clubs were raining cuts, thrusts and blows upon them. At the first onset Ethan spitted Blake through the fleshy part of the neck; the man writhed for a moment, then fell back out of reach howling and endeavoring to stanch the flow of blood. Two of the inn people were badly slashed by Captain Jones, and now he was engaging the Lascar, who was armed with a murderous looking knife, Wheelock and the landlord. Danvers and the rest of the inn people had fixed their attention upon Ethan, and the boy was playing them desperately.

The spy was a finished swordsman and had a wrist like steel; his thrusts were rapid and his defense superb. The smashing blows of the clubs took most of the young American's attention, and each lunge of Danvers became more dangerous.

It was very soon evident that the situation was impossible; nine against two were hopeless odds, and the captain of the Ranger and his young friend were gradually driven back

before the weapons of their adversaries. Their backs were against the wall; desperation was written deep upon their faces, and every ray of hope had gone from their hearts, when the outer door was flung open with a resounding crash, feet were heard bounding across the floor of the other room, and in another instant Longsword had flung himself into the fray with a wild Irish yell!

Like a wheel of flame his huge blade swept about him; the Lascar and one of the stable louts went down like ninepins; Danvers reeled out of the fight with a thrust through the shoulder. And with that the others threw down their weapons and fled.

Breathless, Captain John Paul Jones and Ethan Carlyle leaned upon their swords; Longsword with his point in one hand and hilt in the other glared grimly about him. Danvers, his hand pressed to his bleeding shoulder and his face paler then ever, spoke first.

"I suppose," said he, in a cold, even voice, "that we are your prisoners."

"If this were the United States, or the deck of my ship, you would be, assuredly,"

answered Captain Jones. "As it is, the worst that I could do would be to bring a charge of assault against you before a French magistrate. So, rather than that, I shall let you go free. I give you and your people five minutes in which to take yourselves off."

Neither Blake nor Siki was badly hurt, and young Wheelock was uninjured. The latter helped the others out, and their horses were saddled; well within the time allowed, they were on their way down the snowy road, while John Paul Jones, Ethan and the Irish dragoon stood in the door of the Burgundian King and watched the darkness swallow them up.

CHAPTER VIII

SHOWS HOW BENJAMIN FRANKLIN OPENED THE SECRET DISPATCH

Upon reaching Paris the three immediately sought out lodgings and removed the grime of the road. Then the commander and Ethan went to call upon Dr. Franklin and present their dispatches.

The rooms of the famous philosopher, sage and statesman were modestly furnished, but were crowded by a most brilliantly attired company. No representative of a foreign government at the Court of France had ever created such a marked impression as this American commissioner. The imaginative French saw in him one of the sages of ancient Greece reincarnated. His advanced age, his natural dignity, his virtues, his undoubted wisdom made him a man of mark. The courtiers of King Louis admired and respected him, and it was seldom, indeed, that a group of influential persons and young soldiers were not to be found in his rooms.

He received Captain Jones and Ethan with great heartiness, for he was ever eager for news.

"My dear sir," said he, holding the officer's hand tight clasped within his own, "I am most happy to meet you. Your exploits upon the sea have long been known to us here in France, and if every American ship had a commander like you, we'd have the enemy suing for peace within a twelve-month."

John Paul Jones flushed with pleasure. It is noted of him that he ever loved to be praised, and praise from such a man as Franklin was praise, indeed.

The sage had not at the beginning of the war with England, given much thought to the sea as a place to meet the foe in the struggle for liberty; being a landsman this was, perhaps, natural. But upon his voyage to France in the Reprisal, Captain Lambert Wickes, his eyes had been opened to the possibilities of what might be done upon deep water. This was the first American war vessel to cross the Atlantic, and two rich prizes were captured under the philosopher's

eyes. When these were sold at a French port and the proceeds added to his slender means his admiration knew no bounds. He saw at once how the enemy might be so weakened by a few swift cruisers in the German ocean as to cripple them permanently; and the dispatching of the Lexington and the other brave little vessels which carried the war under the very shadow of the English cliffs was made according to his suggestion.

It had somehow become noised abroad that the daring and successful American sailor Paul Jones was to call upon Mr. Franklin that morning, and the throng present were most anxious to see and lionize him. They knew too, that he must bring tidings as to the progress of the war.

Count de Vergennes, minister of foreign affairs, was present, and his interest was most marked; upon being introduced to Captain Jones he at once plunged into the subject of the American conflict.

"You and your countrymen have done excellently upon the sea," admitted the count, "but upon the land you have not been so successful."

"General Washington is still in the field. He will never surrender."

"That may be true. But he is retreating, retreating—ever retreating. This does not win battles. The British are apparently triumphant upon every hand. Your army has been driven from Canada; you have evacuated Long Island; New York is in the hands of your country's foes; and it is rumored that the American soldier is throwing down his arms and taking advantage of the pardon which General Howe offered all who would return."

As he stood at a window some little distance from the group about the commander of the Ranger and the French minister, Ethan noted the eager interest of all. He also saw that Dr. Franklin had opened the letters which had been handed him but still held the secret packet with its seals unbroken; he smiled over the letters as one smiles who is highly pleased.

As the minister continued in the same strain for some time, it dawned upon Ethan that the news of Gates' victory had not yet reached him, and with a thrill he realized that there

was a surprise in store for those present. At length Dr. Franklin lifted his venerable head and said, with a quiet smile:

"But, my dear count, you have not yet heard of the affair of Burgoyne."

The minister of foreign affairs laughed.

"You must not think us so far behind the times, monsieur," he said. "Burgoyne compelled the Americans to retreat from Ticonderoga some time ago. And he followed this up by severely defeating them at a place called Hubbardton. This news reached us promptly and through a channel which we never question."

"My news," and Franklin fluttered his letters triumphantly, "is very much later than yours, it would seem. Burgoyne undoubtedly accomplished what you claim. But it is the result of his subsequent operations of which I speak."

"You have news, monsieur?" The face of the Count de Vergennes shone with satisfaction; this gentleman was ever a friend to America, and was always hungry for news of American success.

"Burgoyne's troubles began with his ad-

vance upon Fort Edward. A thousand German mercenaries were killed and captured to begin with. Then he crossed the Hudson in force to turn the American position at Bemis Heights; but Arnold met him with desperate courage and held him back."

A murmur of admiration went up from the Frenchmen present.

"A brilliant officer, this General Arnold," commented the count.

"Burgoyne's communications with Lake Champlain were then cut by a dashing enterprise of my countrymen; forced by the hunger of his men, the British general risked another battle," proceeded Dr. Franklin, "and met with a crushing defeat."

Another murmur went up; eyes sparkled with pleasure; hands applauded softly.

"But," argued the Count de Vergennes, "the tables might be turned once more. Burgoyne may still conquer."

Franklin smiled serenely.

"That is impossible," said he.

"An hour ago I would have said as much for Arnold's chances of victory," said the count.

"I said that Burgoyne's chance of ultimate victory was impossible, because after his defeat he retreated upon Saratoga. Finding himself surrounded he surrendered his entire force to General Gates."

A cry of delight went up; the Americans were congratulated heartily.

"It was such news as this that we have been waiting for," whispered the minister of foreign affairs to the aged commissioner. "From now on things will take a turn; success will await your negotiations now, where only delay and disappointment met you in the past."

When all had gone save Captain Jones and Ethan Carlyle, Dr. Franklin said:

"You will pardon me, I'm sure. These letters spoke of a document of much importance as being in this packet."

He broke the great red seals and tore off the covering; then, as they watched him, they saw his face take on a bewildered look.

"What is it?" cried Captain Jones.

"Strange," said Dr. Franklin. "The entire page is blank save only for one word. Look."

He held out the sheet, and they found

staring them in the face, scrawled in huge, sprawling letters, the name:

"Siki."

"Robbed!" exclaimed John Paul Jones.

"He got the packet after all," cried Ethan, with a great leap at his heart.

"Explain your meaning," said Dr. Franklin, still bewildered. "I do not understand."

In as few words as possible the entire story of the attempt made to steal the papers was told him. He listened intently, and shook his head gloomily at the end.

"He was a cunning rascal, indeed, that Lascar," said he. "He took the packet and substituted another resembling it in order to delay the alarm long enough to permit him to get safe away."

"But," cried Paul Jones, "how could he know anything about the appearance of the packet?"

"You forget our young friend's statement that the Lascar saw it lying upon the table between him and Mr. Hancock. For a fellow as keen as he it only required a glance and he carried away a picture of it in his mind."

"The attack at the inn is more than I can

understand," said Ethan. "If they already had the dispatch why should they set upon us after demanding it? The matter has a queer look."

"Most queer," agreed the sage, wrinkling his brows. "And, to me, there seems to be only one explanation: The Lascar stole the dispatch and kept the fact hidden from his employer and comrades. He had come to understand that it was a very valuable thing and made up his mind that the profit to come from it was to be all his own."

"Bravo," cried John Paul Jones. "That must be it—and that fact holds out a promise."

"Of what nature?"

"We may recover the dispatch! The Lascar will be forced to sound every step of his way toward the disposal of the paper. He may know that it is valuable but he will not know to whom."

"A good thought," said Mr. Franklin. "As long as it does not reach the British ministers, who alone would understand it, the paper can do no harm."

"It shall not reach them," cried Ethan.

"I'll hunt this man, Siki, all over Europe but what I'll have the dispatch from him!"

And Captain Jones reached forward and clasped him by the hand.

CHAPTER IX

HOW ETHAN AND LONGSWORD MET A MAN NAMED FOCHARD

Captain Jones did not propose to leave Paris for a few days, and this gave Ethan an idea.

"When Danvers and Siki and the rest of them rode away from the Burgundian King the other night they came in the direction of Paris. I think that it would be as well were Shamus and myself to look about in the districts most frequented by sailors; we might come upon the Lascar, somewhere."

As the commander of the Ranger approved of this, the two set out that afternoon.

"We'll take our blades wid us," said the Irish dragoon; "the civil authorities of Paris don't look out for things very well, so I've heard, Master Ethan, and as there are lots of cut-purses in all big cities we'd as well be on the safe side."

Paris of pre-revolutionary days was vastly

different from the present city. Its poor, like those of the country places, were poor indeed, while its rich were magnificently superior in manner and most splendid in dress. Squalor and grandeur were to be seen on every hand; the noisome dens of the Faubourg San Antoine, which less than a score of years afterward were to hurl their hordes of red-capped, blood-hungry maniacs into the vortex of the "Terror," and the beautiful structures of the rich were not far separated. Ethan and Longsword, as they walked about, wondered how such a state of things could exist among a people apparently so highly schooled in all the refinements of civilization.

Evening drew on and still they were afoot; both began to grow somewhat hungry.

"I think," said Ethan, "that we had better be getting back to our lodgings."

"I've been thinking that same for some time," said Longsword. "A rasher of bacon and eggs, as that landlady cooks them, would be mighty comforting, so it would."

They proceeded along for some time; then their progress became a hesitating sort of thing, and at last they stopped.

"Shamus," asked Ethan, a laugh in his voice, "where do we live?"

"Faith, then, Master Ethan, I don't know. Ye see I have no French, and these bla'guard names that they give these streets get the better of me."

"Then," said Ethan, "we are lost."

"But we can ask some one the way."

"We could if we knew what street to ask for—but we don't."

Longsword pulled a long face, and pondered.

"Sorra the taste of supper will we get to-night," mourned he.

"Did the street sound anything to you like Rue Constantine?" asked Ethan, after a pause.

"It did," answered Shamus eagerly. "It is very much like it, faith!"

"Then we'll try for that."

A shopman was appealed to and he directed them with much earnestness.

"You will not take the next turn, nor the next," he explained in rapid French. "But the next after that you will take, for that is the Rue Constantine. It runs but the one

direction from here, so if you walk along it and look carefully you cannot miss your house, monsieurs."

They thanked the man and made their way in the direction indicated. When they turned into the Rue Constantine, Longsword said :

" Here it is, sure enough. I remember us passing that great building over there some time since. Faix, and it'd be a queer thing entirely if we hadn't found our way back, so it would."

But Ethan seemed rather doubtful. Gazing about, he said :

" Don't be quite so sure about your big building, Shamus. We've passed quite a number of them in the last few hours."

" Ah, but we are right anyway, Master Ethan, as you'll find. A half hour will see us doing justice to that good French woman's fine cooking."

They strode along for more than a half hour ; at length Ethan saw that doubt was shaking the confidence of Longsword. He laughed gleefully.

" Well, we may yet stay in the streets sup-

perless all night," said he. "Are you very hungry, Shamus?"

"Master Ethan," said the trooper, "this walk has given me an appetite such as I haven't had since I were a bit of a gossoon at home in Tipperary."

This solemn assurance and the feeling manner with which it was delivered was too much for Ethan. He leaned against a pillar of a building which they were passing and shouted with mirth.

"You'll kill me yet, you old death's head," cried he at length. "But, go on, let's see if we can't make you happy by finding the house and the supper that you so long for."

Some distance farther along Shamus uttered an exclamation of delight.

"Here we are, sure," said he. "The brown building with the railings about it and the wide roof like a bird box."

"There are many such houses in Paris," said Ethan. "And we've passed some of them within the last ten minutes."

"But none wid the window gardens at the second floor," declared Longsword. "Sure, the landlady's wee bit of a daughter were tell-

ing me the names of all the flowers while ye and the captain were off to the commissioner's this morning. Of course I couldn't understand a word she said, but that made no differ at all, at all. Oh, yes, this is the house."

The window gardens settled it with Ethan, so they went up the high stone steps and beat a sharp rat-tat upon the big brass knocker.

The Rue Constantine was dark; there were few people abroad, as the night was cold and the frozen snow upon the walks made the footing treacherous. Lights gleamed from a few windows, the curtains of which had not been drawn; now and then a vehicle would go rattling heavily by, crunching the ice under its wheels. The door opened and a bald old man with spectacles looked at them sharply from the threshold.

"Where are you from?" he asked, in an odd sort of way.

"The United States," answered Ethan, wonderingly.

The bald man stood aside and allowed them to enter; then he closed the door and said rather angrily,

"You should have answered, America."

Ethan and Longsword exchanged glances and smiled. They had not seen the old man before, and looked at him curiously. Of course, the Irishman did not understand what he said, but his shining pall and his jerky way of looking over the rims of his big spectacles was sufficient for Longsword; he nodded and smiled to the old man, in great good humor.

"Is the captain at home, do you know?" asked Ethan.

The bald man cackled shrilly.

"The captain," said he. "So you call him that, do you?"

"Of course."

"Ah! Very good. And a splendid captain he is, I think."

As he spoke the old man opened a door disclosing a very well-appointed room lighted by a number of wax candles.

"Will you step in?" he asked. "The captain said that you were to wait for him here."

The two stepped wonderingly into the room. The old man followed them just beyond the doorway, and then paused.

"He is within there," spoke he, with a nod of the head toward a door that communicated, apparently, with another room. "He is engaged with the person whom you have been in search of."

"Not Siki," exclaimed Ethan.

"We are to mention no names, if you please," warned the old man, looking over the horn rims of his glasses, and wagging his head in strong disapproval.

While Ethan was yet gazing at him in astonishment, he nodded and disappeared, closing the door behind him.

"What a queer looking old codger," said the Irish trooper. "What talk had he?"

Ethan translated the words of the man and Longsword opened his eyes in wonder.

"Is it possible that Captain Jones told this old fellow about the document and its loss," cried he. "Faith and it don't seem likely, so it don't."

"Indeed it does not," responded Ethan. "And yet what else are we to understand by his words? He knew that you and I were out in search of some one; and he said that that some one was at present with the captain."

"It has a queer look to me," said Longsword, scratching his head in a puzzled fashion. "And do ye know, Master Ethan, the house seems to have a strange look, too; faith it don't seem the same at all, at all."

"Nonsense," laughed Ethan. "Don't let your imagination run riot, old fellow. You and I are not well enough acquainted with the house to know how it looks."

Just then there was the sound of a door opening and closing. Then they heard voices in the hall, as though some one had stepped out of the adjoining room.

"Yes," said one of the voices, "I understood that you were being sought for anxiously all the afternoon."

"By whom?" asked another voice.

"By Messieurs Danvers and Wheelock. They are in my reception room waiting for me at this moment."

"Had you better not introduce me; you know that I have not met them as yet."

"No more have I. You'd better wait until I've settled this matter with them. Come tomorrow and I'll be able to give you full in-

formation as to the price that will be paid if the dispatch is recovered."

"I'm afraid it never will be. These Lascars are cunning dogs."

"But Siki made the mistake of trying to dispose of the paper in Paris. That is how we found him out. No one would have suspected that he had it, but for that. And a man who makes a mistake once, may do so again."

"You are right. Good-night, Monsieur Fochard. I will call upon you to-morrow as you request."

The door leading to the street opened, and the other voice returned.

"Good-night, monsieur. Have no fear. I think all will be well in the end."

The door then closed, and the man Fochard returned to the room adjoining. Ethan gripped Longsword's arm in a clasp that made even that man of iron wince.

"No matter what happens," said he, "express no surprise. Act as though you considered it all as a matter of course."

"What is it?" queried Longsword, astonished at his young master's manner.

"We are in the wrong house. And we have stumbled upon a clue to the missing dispatch."

The door leading into the next room was now thrown open, and a stout, florid man in a velvet coat and with a great bunch of seals hanging from a heavy gold watch chain, stepped into the room.

"Gentlemen," said he, advancing and holding out both hands, "I am most delighted to meet you."

When he had shaken hands with them he continued, addressing Longsword,

"You are Monsieur Danvers, I take it."

"He does not speak French," Ethan informed the man.

Fochard expressed his surprise with a shrug.

"Not speak French! That is odd. How then did his government come to choose him for this work in France?"

"You forget, monsieur," said Ethan coolly, "that his coming to France was by accident. The dispatch got this far because our plans miscarried. Danvers' working ground is the United States, and a knowledge of the French language is not necessary there."

"True, true," answered Fochard. "I had forgotten that. Then Monsieur Wheelock, I well express myself through you, if you will be so kind, as I speak no English."

"I shall be pleased to do anything that I can to help the matter along."

Fochard laughed and patted him upon the back.

"We shall all be pleased to do what we can in this matter," chuckled he. "Ah, the dispatch must indeed be an important one! Ten thousand pounds in English gold! Think of it. No wonder the rascally Lascar desired to secure it all for himself."

While he was speaking Fochard led the way into the adjoining room and closing the door, bowed them into chairs with the utmost politeness. The apartment was much smaller than the one they had just left; the walls were lined with walnut cabinets, each numbered and lettered; a desk piled with papers stood beneath a huge, swinging lamp.

"I am most glad," said Monsieur Fochard, "that this matter came to my notice while there was yet some chance of success."

Ethan bowed, and repeated the man's words

in English to Longsword. The latter seemed astonished and was about to ask some questions, but a secret signal from Ethan stopped him.

"At first I thought," said the Frenchman, "that the Lascar would try to sell the paper back to the Americans. And in this I was not very far wrong. He would have endeavored to do so had he not discovered that they could not afford to pay so much for it as the English."

"How do you manage to find these things out?" asked Ethan curiously.

Fochard laughed, clasped his plump white hands before him and twirled his thumbs.

"My agents are everywhere, even in King Louis' bedchamber," he replied. "The system that I have built up is the result of years of labor. There is nothing of importance happens in Paris that I do not know. When the loss of this American dispatch filtered through to me, I at once communicated with you and appointed this meeting."

"It was most kind of you," said Ethan after he had acquainted Longsword with the outline of what Fochard had said. He did

this because he had a lurking suspicion that the man might not be so ignorant of English as he professed to be. "But," the boy proceeded, "has anything further been discovered?"

"There has been important information brought to me within the past hour; in fact the agent who brought it was Garvace, and he left but a few moments ago. The Lascar once served the English Earl of Selkirk in some capacity and is, so it is understood, now on his way to some port where he can get a ship for England or Scotland and so place the papers in the Earl's hands for the crown."

"Do you know what port he is headed for?"

"No; but like as not it is Brest or Nantes; or perhaps L'Orient."

"He is wounded and may perhaps be delayed upon that account," said Ethan.

"Yes, that is true; however, I have taken no chances with him, for he is a most cunning rascal. My agents are after him. Not a vessel will leave any French port until it has been searched for him in my secret way."

"Can we do anything to assist you?"

"Not in France, no. But we have learned that the Earl of Selkirk is most likely to be found at this time of the year at his place on St. Mary's Isle. It is there Siki will make his way should he succeed in eluding us. My advice to you is to go there with your men, and wait for him."

"Your advice," said Ethan, who had been repeating all this to his companion, "is good."

"That, then," said Fochard, rising as a sign that the interview was at an end, "is all that I can do for you, now. You will pardon me, I know; but I have most important matters that claim my attention."

"Then we will not detain you," said Ethan.

As he led them out of the room, and toward the street door, Fochard continued:

"The division of the reward is understood, then, to be as I desired. Half to me and half to Monsieur Danvers to be shared among our respective agents as we see fit."

"Monsieur Danvers will be perfectly satisfied with that arrangement, I have no doubt," said Ethan.

"Tell him to consider the matter and send me word by messenger before he leaves Paris.

I like these little matters settled at the beginning. And now, gentlemen, I will bid you good-night."

They then found themselves shaking hands with the secret agent upon his door-step; a moment later the door had closed and they were standing upon the frozen walk, gazing at each other in astonishment.

CHAPTER X

THE CRUISE OF THE RANGER

It was a good two hours later when Ethan and the Irish dragoon finally discovered their lodgings. Captain Jones was busy over some papers in his room when Ethan knocked upon his door.

"Come in," said the sailor. "I had just about finished." He sealed up some documents, and then went on, "Your search was longer than you intended, was it not? and, I suppose, without much success."

"Our search resulted in nothing," returned Ethan. "But by sheer luck we stumbled upon a most remarkable discovery."

Then he related the main incident of the night, and Captain Jones listened with the greatest attention.

"Quite remarkable," commented he, as the lad finished. "But, really, except for the fact that we now know where Siki expects to dispose of the paper, we learned all this from Dr.

Franklin's judgment in the matter. St. Mary's Isle, eh," he continued, musingly. "I know the place well; and, who knows, perhaps I may touch there in the Ranger and look into this matter."

Not having had any definite instructions from Mr. Jefferson about when he should return to America, Ethan had considered that he should remain in France until the paper was recovered or proven to be lost for good and all. He had had no notion of continuing the cruise with Captain Jones, but now that the Ranger and the recovery of the dispatch seemed linked, as it were, he eagerly asked to be allowed to go.

"The chances are," he reasoned, "that the Lascar will slip through their fingers. If you can land Longsword and me upon St. Mary's Isle we may be in time to do some good."

"I shall be most glad to have you," said the Ranger's captain. "And somehow it seems to me that a landing at St. Mary's Isle is going to lead to good of some sort. I sometimes get impressions like that, and they usually point pretty close to facts in the end."

Three or four days later John Paul Jones,

Ethan Carlyle and Longsword once more reached Nantes; and the former immediately set about getting his ship ready for the voyage that was to strike terror to the hearts of the British and fill those of the struggling Americans with delight.

Upon the trip across the Atlantic the prediction that the commander had made to Ethan in Portsmouth harbor had been realized. Many defects and weaknesses were discovered in the Ranger, and these he now set about remedying as far as possible.

The ship's trim was altered; her ballast was taken out and restowed; her masts were shortened, also, by some feet. No man ever sailed the ocean who knew more about the small details of seamanship than John Paul Jones; after he had been in a vessel a few weeks it was an assured thing that she had come to do all that there was in her. Many a cranky, slow answering tub had been transformed, by his knowledge, into a speedy, amenable ship.

After they had cleared the harbor the Ranger showed marked evidence of improvement in her work.

"She'll answer, now," said her captain, with satisfaction.

Off Cape Clear a British brig was captured and sent into Brest, as was the Lord Chatham, a ship out of London, which they took a little later.

While heading up the Irish channel one day during the first dog-watch, Ethan and the commander were pacing the quarter-deck.

"Do you intend to head directly for St. Mary's Isle?" asked the boy.

"No; I had thought of a plan by which an attempt might be made upon Whitehaven. There is a great deal of shipping in the harbor there I know; and if it could be destroyed it would be a damaging blow."

"You are quite familiar with that port, are you not?"

"I sailed out of it upon my first voyage, and first saw the light of day not many miles from it. Let me once get into the harbor with a fire boat and I'll forever put a stop to the burnings and ravagings that the British are so free with upon our undefended coast. A blaze that would sweep every hull from Whitehaven would show them that we have the power to

retaliate; and after that they would be more apt to hold their savagery in check.

"I think you are right," agreed Ethan. "There is nothing like a swift retaliation to teach a brutal and insolent enemy to be merciful."

There was a strong wind blowing when the Ranger came in sight of Whitehaven and beat up toward it. The boats had been lowered, manned, and were about to be called away, when the wind suddenly shifted and blew on shore. The position of the American was now most dangerous, so the boats were promptly hoisted in once more and the Ranger beat out to sea.

Off Carrickfergus they took a small fishing-boat. The skipper was a hot-tempered little Celt, and he made a great ado about the matter.

"Faith, then, captain," said he to the smiling commander of the sloop-of-war, "I think it's a shame, so I do, that an honest man can't cast his nests into the say for the bits of fish that do be swimming about, widout being dragged on board a Yankee that he don't want to get acquainted wid."

"Well," replied Captain Jones, "we are not quite so discourteous. We desired your acquaintance and went to some little trouble to make it."

"Sure, then," snapped the other, "if I carried the guns aboard of me that the Drake do, as she lies there in Belfast Lough, you would not be so ready to come near me, perhaps."

"The Drake?" questioned Captain Jones, with interest. "You mean, I suppose, the British ship-of-war of that name?"

"I do," returned the fisherman. "And she is a fine vessel, for she carries twenty guns and a hundred and fifty men."

The commander of the Ranger turned to his first officer, briskly.

"I think, Mr. Simpson," said he, "that we'll change our course for Belfast Lough and see what can be done with that vessel."

"We are not out to engage war ships," growled Simpson, sullenly.

"We are out to engage anything that promises to injure the enemy," said the captain sharply. "You will please pass my order along."

The lieutenant did as requested. It is noted

of this insubordinate officer that he seemed to regard the voyage of the Ranger more as an enterprise for private gain than anything else; a rich merchantman pleased him greatly; but he had little or no stomach for a fight with a vessel that carried any weight of metal.

More sail was made upon the ship when she was brought into her new course; in the mouth of the Lough she beat to and fro until night, then she ran into the harbor.

The Drake lay well up in the harbor, and it was Captain Jones' intention to lay the Ranger alongside her and board.

"When I give the word," said he to the boatswain, who was in charge of a group of men on the forecastle deck, "let go the bow anchors."

Cutlasses, boarding-pikes and pistols were distributed, and the crew stood ready. With a magnificent display of seamanship John Paul Jones brought the Ranger up and laid her athwart the Drake.

"Let go the anchor," he commanded in a low voice.

There was a scuffling and stumbling among the seamen in the bow; the anchor-chain

rattled, then stopped; the American sloop-of-war drifted down past the lee quarter of the Englishman; at this point the anchor fell with a loud plunge, and the Ranger lay directly under the broadside of the Drake.

There was a stir among the watch upon the British ship's deck.

"Ahoy, there, you blundering lubber!" yelled a voice. "What are you about?"

"No harm done," answered Captain Jones, promptly. "Anchor-chain fouled." Then in a low tone he added: "Cut that cable and let the anchor go."

Ethan Carlyle seized an axe from the rack, and with a deft, sure blow severed the thick line; the Ranger drifted slowly out of her dangerous position; as another attempt of the same sort could not be risked, sail was clapped upon her and she raced out of the Lough like a hunted hare.

"It's a rare good thing she took us for a clumsy merchantman," commented Ethan to Captain Jones, as they stood together upon the deck. "She could have raked us from stem to stern as we lay there, and we could not have brought a single gun to bear on her."

"Fate seems to fight against us," laughed Captain Jones. "Now for Whitehaven once more, and let us hope for a favorable wind."

They reached that port once more about eight in the evening upon the twenty-second of the month; but the boats were not called away until after midnight.

There were two of these, and were manned by crews of heavily armed volunteers. Ethan and Longsword had volunteered for the captain's boat.

"I will advance and attack the forts," said the commander to Lieutenant Wallingford, who was in charge of the other boat. "Your share in the enterprise is to get well in among the shipping and set fire to it."

These were all the instructions given. Day began to dawn as they reached the outer pier of the harbor.

"Take the north side," directed Captain Jones, "and pull hard."

"Ay, ay, sir," answered the third officer; his boat drew away from the other and made into the harbor.

"There are the forts upon the south side, are they not?" asked Ethan.

"Yes," said John Paul Jones, "and they are likely to be slimly manned. I know the custom here, you see."

"It reminds me of old times, faith," whispered Longsword to Ethan, as he sat in the stern with his great brass-hilted blade between his knees.

Captain Jones was right; the first fort was garrisoned by about a half dozen heavy eyed soldiers. Ethan, Longsword and a few of the more daring seamen scaled the wall and overpowered these without trouble.

"Into the guard house with them," ordered Ethan, "and fasten them in."

When the gate was thrown open and Jones and the remainder of the boat's crew entered, the former said briskly,

"Spike the guns; we may have them roaring about our ears soon if we don't."

Longsword drove the plugs of iron into the vents of the cannon with swift and hearty blows.

"Now, Mr. Browne," continued the captain, "station a few men to guard the approaches from the town. Mr. Carlyle, come with me."

While Browne, middy, was stationing the

men, Ethan hurried away with the captain toward the point where they had landed.

"That is Wallingford's boat that I see advancing," said the commander, pointing to a craft slowly emerging from a wall of mist. "And I see no indications from the harbor that he has carried out my orders."

As a matter of fact there was no blaze among the shipping and Ethan saw that the face of the commander was set and stern. Wallingford's boat touched and the lieutenant sprang ashore.

"Well, sir," rapped out the captain.

"My lights went out, sir, just as I was about to begin work, and so I could not carry out my orders."

This was long before the day of "brimstone" matches. The two boats carried lanterns in which were placed lighted candles, and to these most uncertain things they had to trust for the success or failure of a most brilliantly planned expedition.

"You will find lights in my boats there, I think," said Captain Paul Jones. "Take them and try once more; there may yet be time."

His face was white with anger; he had

worked hard and dared much for success, and that such a trivial thing as this should threaten failure almost made him lose control of himself.

Ethan bounded toward the captain's boat to get the lights; but here, too, the candles had guttered out, and all that was left was a smear of tallow and the blackened end of a wick.

"Lights are out here, too," he cried. Captain Jones drew in his breath sharply.

"It seems that we are to have our share of misfortune indeed," said he with a mirthless laugh. "But lights must be had."

"There is a house a little way below there," volunteered Ethan. "I saw it as we came along. It's farther from the town than any other."

"Tell Browne to give you a few men, and go there, then," said the commander instantly. "Knock and ask decently at first; but if they refuse, or delay, beat down the door and help yourself."

Ethan was back at the fort in a few moments' sharp run. Longsword and a seaman named Freeman were given him and they

started toward the house which Ethan had in mind. Now as it happened this Freeman was an Englishman and the very worst man in the Ranger to be selected for the work in hand.

The house proved to be a small public inn, and the young American hammered upon the door loudly with the heavy butt of a pistol. As no answer came Longsword dealt the door a brace of lusty kicks that made the entire structure rattle.

"They seem to be sound sleepers," said Freeman, who had remained very quiet up till then. "Suppose I go around to the rear and see what can be done."

He did not wait for Ethan's permission but at once disappeared around a corner of the building. A nervous tremble in the man's voice caused the Irishman to instinctively suspect something. He also turned the corner a moment later, and saw Freeman speeding away towards the town.

"Master Ethan," roared the dragoon. "He's off."

"Whom do you mean?"

"The Englishman. There he goes, as fast as his legs can take him."

"We'll have the whole of Whitehaven here in short order now," said Ethan. "He's gone to give the alarm."

"Not if I can stop him," shouted the ex-trooper. He threw up his pistol with a quick, expert snap of the arm, and fired. Freeman half-halted, tottered a little, but continued on toward the town almost as fast as before.

"You got him," said Ethan.

"But not enough," grumbled Longsword. "It hardly cut the skin of him."

"Try for him, once more, with this," and Ethan offered Shamus his own pistol. The Irishman was a wonderful shot with these awkward weapons; but the range caused him to shake his head.

"Too late," said he. "It'd take a musket to find a man at that distance."

The sound of the shot had the effect of arousing the house; a window was thrown open above, a night-capped head was protruded, while a pair of sleep heavy eyes blinked down at them in the pale light of the dawn.

"Hello," cried the owner of the night cap in a husky sort of bellow. "What's wanted below there?"

"Arrah, come down wid ye and open the door," requested Longsword with great promptness.

"And have myself killed for my trouble," said the man at the window.

"Ye'll get yourself killed if you don't do as you're told, my friend," said Longsword with a reckless flourish of his empty pistol. The man withdrew his head with a jerk; and though they continued to call to him, he refused to show himself.

"Down with the door," cried Ethan at last. And putting their shoulders to it they sent it crashing inward. There now came a perfect storm of screams and yells from the regions above.

They found themselves in a room in which a sea coal fire was burning; after a short search Ethan found a couple of fat pine billets which he stuck partly into the fire. While they awaited such time as the torches should ignite, they stood in the broken doorway and looked earnestly toward the town. The noises from the rooms above had died away; and now a long, low murmur as of many voices was carried to their ears by the

wind, which was toward the harbor. With each moment the sound increased in volume; it would rise sharply and then fall away, only to rise once more.

"The town is up, sure enough," said Longsword, grimly. "Freeman has lost no time."

Once more the murmur of the distant voices rose and fell; it had a fierce intensity that came awesomely to the listeners as they shivered in the chill of that spring morning. From far down the street a huddle of people swept around a corner; in their hands they bore all sorts of hastily snatched weapons; and by their gesticulations Ethan saw that they were wrought up to a pitch of frenzy.

"We have no time to waste," said the young American, rapidly. "In a few moments more they will be here."

He ran into the room and snatched the torches from the coals; the ends were smoldering only, but he swung them about his head a few times and they burst into a blaze.

"Now we are ready," he cried. In a moment they were out in the road. The shrill cries of the advancing townspeople sounded

fiercer still; the heavy tramp of their feet was swift and menacing.

"They mean business, sure," cried Longsword. "Look out!"

Two or three bullets struck near them and the vengeful cries increased. From the window of the inn the landlord was clamoring at the top of his lusty voice.

"Come on," shouted Ethan to the Irishman as he darted down the road. Longsword followed close at his heels; now and then he flourished his empty pistol and defied the crowd mutely.

John Paul Jones was awaiting them eagerly.

"Hah! You have the lights. Good! But what is that noise I hear? You have injured none of the folks at the house, I hope."

"No," answered Ethan. "Freeman, the sailor whom we took with us, slipped into the town and aroused the people. They are coming in crowds."

A frown wrinkled the commander's brow.

"I had hoped that this would not happen, at least, until we had kindled a good blaze.

But we must do our best, as it is. Ahoy, there, into the brig, and put the torch to her."

There were a great number of vessels which had been taking in or discharging cargoes; for the most part they lay close together, and a fire started in one would probably mean the destruction of all.

The brig to which Paul Jones referred was one of the largest vessels at hand, and a great quantity of combustible matter had been scattered through her while Ethan had been securing the lights. Those set to apply the torch did not perform that duty quickly enough for the impatient commander; so he sprang forward, snatched a blazing brand from one of them and leaped aboard the brig. Plunging below decks he applied the torch; as he gained the deck once more he was followed by a thick cloud of smoke and a shower of sparks.

The people of Whitehaven had, by this time, reached the entrance to the wharf, though the sight of a number of heavily-armed seamen halted them promptly. But with each passing moment their numbers in-

creased, their shouts and execrations filled the air; every now and then a flight of missiles would patter about the Americans. Then the fired brig burst into a fierce blaze; from every port and seam smoke and flame jetted and curled; and as no more was now to be done, Paul Jones shouted:

"To the boats, men. But take your time. Show any evidence of haste, and we'll have all those people upon us."

The men obeyed. With Lieutenant Wallingford's eye upon them, they climbed into the boats. Captain Jones, however, remained upon the pier. Ethan was about to follow the others when he noticed this.

"All hands in the boats, sir," said he.

"Very well," answered the other coolly.

The fire in the brig had suddenly begun to die away, and he feared that it was about to go out. Ethan realized that this was the cause of his delay.

"It needs more draught, I think," said the boy.

"If the hatches were all off it would have more chance," said the captain.

Without a word Ethan sprang to the vessel's

rail and climbed aboard. As luck would have it an axe was at hand; and in a moment his sturdy blows were ringing and crashing in the ears of the mob. This latter had constantly grown larger; from every direction the people were hastening to the scene. When the throng realized what the axe blows meant, a wild howl went up from them.

"Down with the Yankee pirate," came the cry.

"They are burning the ship!" shrilled a newcomer.

"Look," shouted another; "there is only one man. Shall five hundred loyal subjects of the king be braved by one American cutthroat?"

"Never!" roared the mob.

Like a fury Ethan hacked and hewed at the hatches until he had them all cut away; he was delivering the finishing strokes when the press from the rear of the crowd became so great that those in front were hurled forward.

"Back!" cried the intrepid John Paul Jones, presenting his heavy pistols in their faces. "Keep back!"

This ready action and the coolness of the man filled the angry mob with fear. With cries of alarm they fled back to their former positions at the head of the pier. The brig was now wrapped in a solid sheet of flame; and as there was nothing that demanded the further detaining of the Ranger's boats, the captain sprang into one of them, followed by Ethan, and they pushed off.

Immediately the crowd surged down the pier; some sprang to fight the flames; others stood at the harbor's edge and shrieked their threats of vengeance; but the tars in the rapidly-receding boats only answered by a derisive laugh. Some one released the guard at the fort; the hastily-driven spikes were wrenched from one or two of the guns; and they were loaded and trained upon the boats.

But by the time their sullen reports broke upon the morning air the Americans were out of range; and in a very little while later the dashing sloop-of-war, under a press of white canvas, had disappeared beyond the vision of those upon the shore.

CHAPTER XI

ON ST. MARY'S ISLE

EXPRESSES dashed about and signal fires burned along the coast from one end of England to the other. Fear fell upon the folk of every commercial port and fishing hamlet. Invasion had been the very last thing that the British had thought possible; no enemy had set his foot upon their soil before in the memory of living man; and now that the despised Americans had accomplished the feat, a wave of mingled fear and fury swept through the "tight little isle."

The British had thought it very right and proper to burn and destroy along the American coast; they considered it a rather quick and effective method of suppressing the rebellious subjects of the king.

But when the youthful republic sent this daring sailor, Paul Jones, across the sea and through him applied the torch to British property and in a British harbor, the thing seemed vastly different. Pirate was the mild-

est term they could find for the chief of the Ranger; and indeed so they affect to regard him to this day.

Parliament was appealed to by the populace, and it was implored to have armed vessels sent out after the daring Yankee, and to scour the seas until he was either taken or sunk.

News of all this reached John Paul Jones through vessels that he captured in the Irish Channel; but he only laughed and glanced proudly about at his trim, swift, well-armed ship.

"It is about time that our friend the Lascar was due at St. Mary's Isle," said he to Ethan, one evening as they sat in the cabin talking over the secret dispatch and its probable fate. "I am thinking of heading for there and giving you a chance to see."

"Do," said the lad eagerly. "Think what the loss of this paper might mean to our country. We should use every means in our power to recover it; and St. Mary's Isle offers at least a possibility."

"What you say is very true," said the commander gravely. "But I have still another reason for making this landing."

"Indeed."

"From time to time the people of the United States have heard of the dreadful treatment meted out to American prisoners of war in the British hulks and jails; but in spite of the protests of Congress, nothing has been done by the English king to alter this state of affairs."

"It is believed to be growing constantly worse."

"The only hope of relief to our imprisoned countrymen," said Paul Jones, "lies in our ability to effect a system of exchange."

"But this has been tried many times before," said Ethan. "I copied the papers for Mr. Jefferson upon one occasion. But nothing ever came of it."

"The reason of that is very clear. We have had no prominent captives. Let us once get a man of great name into our power and we can compel the beginning of such a system."

"That seems very likely," said the lad.

"Here is the Earl of Selkirk, one of England's most exalted personages. If we had him in our power it would not be many

months before the treatment of American prisoners would change. And when we land upon St. Mary's Isle, the Lascar, Siki, will not be the only person sought; if it is possible to do so, I shall leave there with the earl in this cabin a prisoner and hostage."

Upon the beautiful headland at the mouth of the River Dee, the noble Earl of Selkirk had a magnificent seat. It was not long before the Ranger came in sight of this; the news of what the commander had resolved to do had leaked out and the entire ship hummed with it.

The sloop-of-war ran in close and the boatswain's call rang through her. Two boats' crews, armed with cutlass and pistol, were called away, under the command of Captain Jones and Lieutenants Simpson and Hall. An old, white-haired man met them as the bows of the boats ran up upon the sand; and he bowed low, hat in hand.

"Welcome, sir," said he, the tremble of age in his voice. "The king's officers are always welcome. It has been many months since we have been favored by a visit from a ship of his Majesty's navy."

The old man had the appearance of a steward or an upper servant of some sort; the Ranger flew no flag and he mistook her for a king's ship. Captain Jones smiled kindly upon the old fellow.

"Thank you for your kind words," said he. "I only hope that the earl will be equally glad to see us."

"The earl, sir, would be pleased, I know. But, ah," and the ancient shook his white head sorrowfully, "he has been called away."

"Called away!" The captain exchanged glances with Ethan and his officers, while the boats' crews muttered their disappointment.

"Yes, sir," said the old servant. "He has been a-gone for some time now. Do you know, sir," and he came nearer to John Paul Jones and lowered his voice, "I can't abide these blackamoors."

Ethan Carlyle started; and the commander said quickly:

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean the man who haunted the grounds, sir, for days. He wanted to see the earl; and when, at last, he did see him, the earl went

away to London or some other place. No, sir, I don't like these blackamoors."

"Too late," said Ethan Carlyle, with a great feeling of weight at his heart.

"It would seem that we are to be disappointed in both quests," said the captain, in a low tone. "The earl is gone and he has taken the paper with him. Perhaps it is even now in the hands of the British ministers."

Then he turned to Simpson and Hall. "We may as well return to the ship. There seems to be nothing for us here."

"There is the hall," said Simpson, pointing toward the great white building whose top appeared above the trees. "I have no doubt but what there is rich plunder there."

"Hah!" ejaculated Paul Jones, staring into the lieutenant's sullen face through his puckered eyelids.

"Simpson is right," said Hall. "We have taken this risk, and should not be asked to go back to the ship empty handed."

"Who is it at the hall?" asked Jones of the old servant.

"Only the countess, sir," replied the bewildered old man.

"Do you hear?" and the Ranger's commander wheeled upon his officers with stormy eyes. "There is only a helpless woman then at the house. Are my ship's company to turn buccaneers, indeed?"

"It is all very well for you to hold your high notions," said Lieutenant Simpson with something like a sneer, "but the officers of the Ranger sailed in her for profit. And as here is an excellent chance for booty, I am for seizing it."

"If you sail for glory, Captain Jones," said Hall, "very well. Patriotism is a very good thing; but plunder is not so bad."

There was a murmur of assent from the boats' crews; the continued insubordination of these two officers during the voyage had spoiled the men of the Ranger; there had been times when only the utmost firmness had prevented a mutiny.

"The cruise of the Ranger has not been as fortunate as we could wish," remarked Simpson, "and now that this little chance for plunder presents itself we have no desire to see it slip by."

"Nor the crew either," said Hall, meaningly.

And the men shot frowning glances at their captain.

The latter's face was white with anger and his hand clutched the pistol in his belt. Ethan and Longsword stepped to his side with weapons ready in case of need; the commander gave them a quick look of thanks. But a moment had served to change his mind. To shoot down Simpson and Hall would only bring on a bloody and unnecessary encounter, and the loss of the Ranger to the cause of freedom might result. So the captain's hand dropped away from his pistol butt, and he said in an icy voice:

"You do this thing against my will. I want that understood; and both of you will answer for it before a naval board."

"If you are so very particular about the matter," said Simpson, "why, when the booty is appraised by the prize court, you can buy it in and return it to the noble earl if you so desire."

"I thank you for the suggestion," said the captain, coldly, "and I will act upon it."

They stared at him in silence for a moment; then Hall asked:

"Have we then your permission to proceed, sir?"

"You have both announced your determination to do as you like," said Paul Jones, bitterly, "and I will raise no hand to prevent you carrying out your plans. But the responsibility shall be your own; I will have no hand in the affair."

Without another word, the mutinous officers ordered the men to advance; and away they went toward the hall, their side arms clanking and their sullen eyes avoiding the glance of their angry commander.

History relates how they found the countess in the hall, and surrounded it; how they demanded the plate chest, and how it was given up to them by the lady almost without protest. Ethan and Longsword had followed the party, and with face scarlet with shame the former watched the seamen bear off the chest.

"It seems, Longsword," said the lad, his eyes smoldering with rage, "that we have turned thieves."

"Yes, faith, and nasty, low-down thieves in the bargain," agreed the Irish dragoon.

"Look at the captain," said Ethan, pointing to the slight figure of the Ranger's young commander as he paced up and down beneath the trees, with bent head and hands clasped behind him.

There was a set, hard look upon his face as he raised it, and saw the men returning with their plunder. But he said not a word, and at once proceeded to make ready for their return to the Ranger.

Ethan and Longsword were some distance behind the party; the shame that they felt in this act of knavery would not permit them to mingle with the others; and as they were passing a high and beautifully trimmed hedge, the first man clambered into one of the boats.

"Make haste," said Longsword, "we shall be left behind."

They broke into a trot; but hardly had they taken a half dozen steps at the increased pace, when a score of men leaped over or burst through the hedge and fell upon them. Rough hands were clapped upon their mouths; they struggled desperately, but were borne to the ground and pinned there by strong arms. It took some little time to accomplish this, and

when at last they were overcome the Ranger's boats were well upon their way, the men bending strongly to their oars.

CHAPTER XII

IN WHICH DANVERS APPEARS ONCE MORE

AFTER their captors had them securely trussed up with strong ropes, they paid very little attention to Ethan or his companion. Something at sea seemed to interest them greatly, and, filled with curiosity, the two struggled to see what it could be.

"Look how the Ranger's men are dragging at the sweeps," said Ethan.

"They pull like mad," agreed Longsword as he sat up in the sand in spite of his bonds. "And look how the officers are urging them on!"

"Something has happened," said the lad.

"Something will happen within the next half hour," said one of the Englishmen who stood near. "His Majesty's frigate Thunderer is going to have a word to say in this matter pretty soon."

"An English ship!" cried both captives.

"Ay, and a smart craft, too, with plenty of

guns and men. She's been lying further up behind the headland; but we've sent word and she's coming down."

As the man spoke there came the deep boom of a gun; the Ranger, with her sails filled, went flying seaward; from around the headland swept the huge, dark hull and towering sail spread of a British ship of war, a column of white smoke arising from her bow.

"The Yankee are running away," cried a voice. "They can rob defenceless people, but they won't stand and fight."

"What's the matter wid them?" growled Longsword as he watched the Ranger. "Sure our ship can beat that fellow wid ease."

"And she's going to do it," cried Ethan. "Look there. She only stood out for sea-room."

Sure enough the American vessel now wore around and opened fire; from that distance the puffs of smoke from her sides could be seen long before the reports were heard; and when they did come, they were dull and sullen and ominous.

"Hello," cried one of the men on the beach, "that Yankee can shoot a bit."

At the first fire the Thunderer's bowsprit hung limply, her foresails trailing in the sea; a clutter of spars and a broken topmast hung over the deck, and the rent canvas flapped helplessly and wrapped itself about the masts and shrouds.

The Ranger then stood in to take up a more effective position; but the skipper of the British frigate seemed to already have more than enough of the fight; and making what sail he could he quickly scuttled back in the direction from which he had come. The Englishmen were much wrought up over this defeat; but Ethan and Longsword were well pleased.

"She came out like a conqueror," said the lad, "and she went back like a hen caught in a shower of rain."

"You keep quiet," growled one of the men. "You'll have all the trouble you can attend to in a few moments without making more for yourself."

"I and my companion are to be treated as prisoners of war, I suppose," said Ethan.

"You are to be treated just as this gentleman sees fit," answered the man.

As he spoke, he pointed to a newcomer who

came sauntering coolly along, his eyes turned seaward upon the Ranger, which was dressing her yards and about to put to sea.

"Danvers!" exclaimed Ethan, instantly recognizing the jetty hair and the remarkable pallor.

The man turned and darted a swift, searching look at the boy as the cry reached his ears. Then his face lighted up in triumph and he laughed in a short, sharp way that bespoke malicious satisfaction.

"So, it is you, my young friend, is it?" he cried, advancing toward them. "I had heard that my men had made a capture, but had no idea that it was any one but a brace of seamen." He stood looking down at them, a smile showing his white, even teeth, and one hand tapping the hilt of his sword. "So," he went on after a pause, "you have joined with the Lascar, have you?"

"Joined with him," repeated Ethan in surprise.

"Ay, and don't seek to deceive me. I am not Monsieur Fochard."

Ethan and the Irish dragoon laughed at this, and Danvers glowered at them blackly.

"You have seen Monsieur Fochard, then," smiled the young American.

"Less than a half hour after you had gone. Your trick was a most clever one; I am an admirer of cleverness, even when it is displayed against me, and I beg of you to accept my congratulations."

Despite the man's evident anger, it seemed as though he meant this; as an adept in trickery himself, he was forced to admiration at Ethan's apparent excellence in this line.

"But tell me," he went on, bending over them, "how did you know that Fochard was concerned in this matter? and how did you learn that I was to visit him upon the night you and this man," indicating Longsword, "impersonated Wheelock and myself?"

Ethan smiled, but shook his head. It was plain that the man was mystified, and, of course the lad had no desire to enlighten him.

"That," he replied, "is a secret."

Danvers bent his brows still more, and his lips tightened.

"A secret—yes, I suppose it is. And you thought to have the later developments a secret, too, didn't you?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean with regard to the man Siki."

"This," said Ethan in a puzzled way, "is the second time within a very few minutes that you have hinted a mysterious something about this slippery Lascar. But I don't just grasp your meaning."

"You may evade the fact as you please," said Danvers, "but it remains the same. I'll tell you what I have found out. When you discovered who had the dispatch that night in your visit to the secret agent, Fochard, you conceived the idea which you and your friend, Captain Jones, have so admirably carried out."

"And what was that?"

"To seek the Lascar, and enter into a compact with him to sell the dispatch."

Ethan turned white; his eyes blazed and he struggled desperately with the stout ropes that bound him.

"If I were free," he gasped, "I'd make you regret those words."

"Oh, spare me any heroics," sneered the British spy. "I know that both you and that Scottish renegade, John Paul Jones, profess a

most lofty patriotism. But neither of you can deceive me."

"That," cried Longsword, who had not been able to speak before, so great was his astonishment, "is the most bla'guardly accusation I ever heard in me life, so it is. D'ye mean to say that this lad whom I held in me two arms as a babe, would sell his country to your mad old king?"

"If the price of his treachery were sufficient, of course he would," jeered Danvers. "It was the end of country and all else when he knew that ten thousand pounds would be gained by the delivery of the dispatch. I have met many men; and I am a fair judge of these little things, believe me."

"If I were as sharp as you," growled the Irish trooper, "I'd be afraid to associate wid meself, so I would."

"I was here when the Lascar came," said Danvers to Ethan, and ignoring Longsword. "I saw him meet the earl; I overheard what they said."

"Ah!" said Ethan, with an eagerness that he was unable to conceal.

"The fellow told the earl of the paper; he

said that it was then in the possession of another. I met him afterward in the road; it was after dark, and I was soon squeezing his story from his throat."

"And he told you ——?"

"He told me how he sailed from France in the Ranger; how you were now leagued with him, and Jones, also; and you, he said, were the person who had the paper."

"I understand the matter now," said Ethan. "He told you what it suited him to have you believe."

Danvers laughed.

"Oh, don't try to throw the dust in my eyes like that," he said. "I'm too old a hand for that sort of thing."

Ethan at once saw that it would be the merest folly to attempt to convince the man of the Lascar's deception, so he said nothing more.

"Our friend, Siki," said Danvers, "is now safe on board the frigate, Drake, which is lying at Carrickfergus; she was in these waters at the time of my capture of him, and I had him sent aboard for safe keeping."

"I suppose," said Ethan after a short

silence, "that we two are destined for some hulk or prison."

"For a prison, you may be sure," laughed the emissary of the crown, "but a private prison of my own. You'll be safe enough there until I can end the whole matter. And now, where is the dispatch?"

"I only wish I could say," said Ethan. "But I assure you I know nothing of its whereabouts."

Danvers smiled coldly.

"Here, men!" he cried to some of his followers, who had withdrawn some little distance during the above conversation, "search these prisoners; and do it thoroughly."

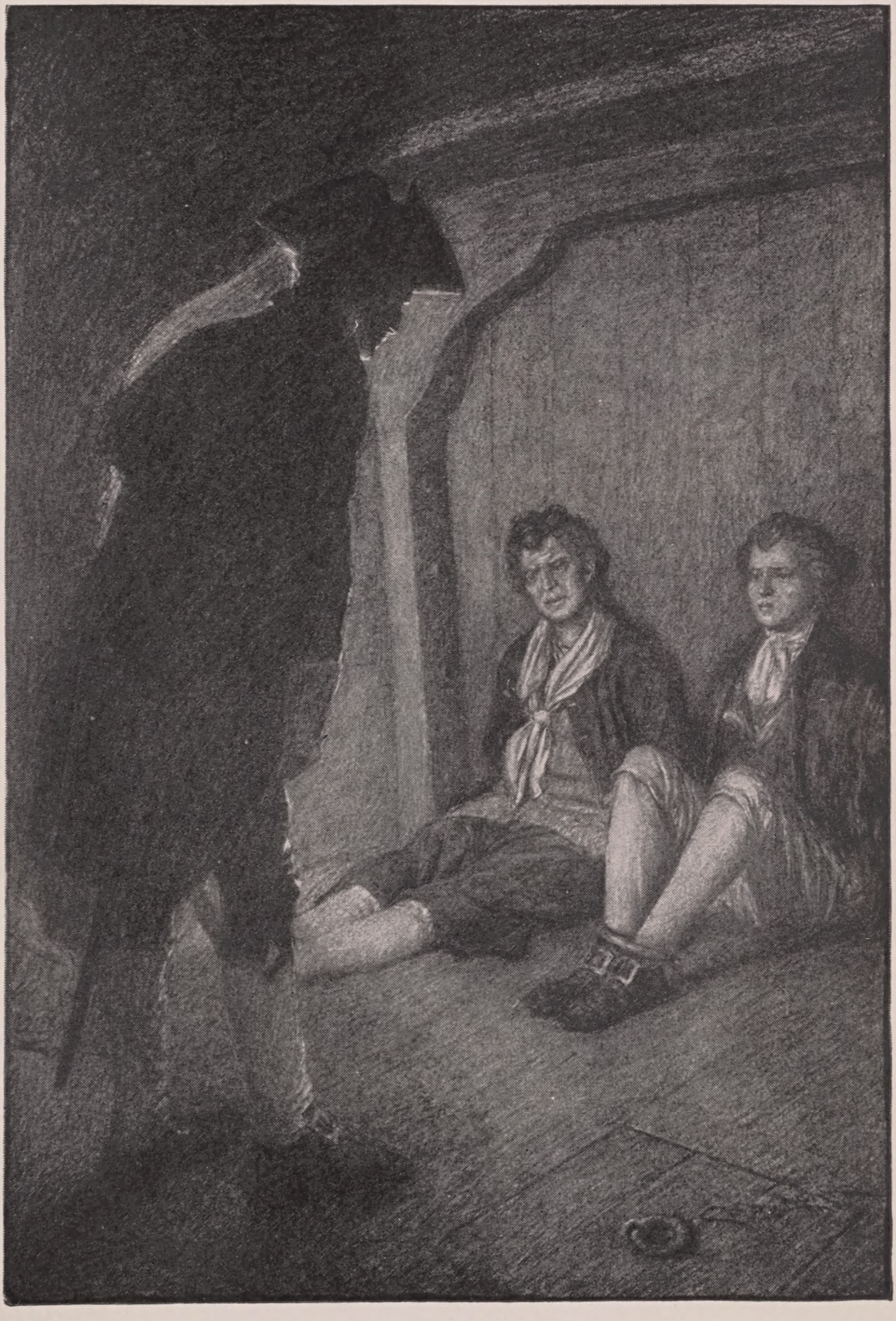
The men did as they were bidden; their search was complete, but, of course it resulted in nothing. Danvers bit his lip and was savage in his disappointment.

"Jones has it, then," he said. "The villain; I'll have it from him yet."

"You seem very ready, Mr. Danvers, to apply harsh names to Americans."

"Jones is not an American."

"You are wrong. By accident of birth he was a Scotchman; but love of liberty and the



DANVERS CAME DOWN INTO THE HOLD

willingness to dare death in her cause has made him American."

"He is a rascally ex-slaver," growled Danvers.

"If a lad of eighteen was a rascal for taking employment in a slave ship, then the English government must be a government of rascals for encouraging that hideous traffic that they might gain money by it."

"How dare you!" cried the Englishman. "How dare you talk so against the king's government while in the king's country!"

"I have not stopped at words against the king's government," said Ethan proudly.

"No; I've heard of the doings of your pirate ship in the channel. But she'll soon meet her fate. British ships and British tars are in search of her."

Ethan laughed amusedly.

"You saw what happened to a British ship less than a half hour ago, did you not? The Ranger will not be so easily taken."

Danvers was a man of violent temper; he could not answer this in the calm manner that he desired; so he turned away without a reply, and gave an order to his men in a

low tone. In a few moments the young American and the Irishman were deposited in the bottom of a large skiff, still trussed up with the ropes, and were being rowed toward the Dee, where a small schooner-rigged tender lay. They were lifted on board of this vessel, which toward night made sail out of the harbor and down the coast.

Ethan and Longsword were eased of the ropes, but were at once ironed in the tender's hold. It was dark there, not a ray of light penetrated anywhere; but they lay and listened to the beat of the channel waters against the sides, and talked in low tones.

"It looks," said Longsword, gloomily, "as though we two were laid up for the rest of the war. Wid British irons upon our legs and arms things don't seem very bright, me lad."

"Don't say that," cried Ethan in a sharp, pained voice. "I can't stand it, Shamus; the thought that we may be chained up in an English ship or a prison of some sort when our country needs every pair of hands that can oppose her foes, makes me desperate. It's like despair itself!"

About an hour after the schooner had got well under way, Danvers came down into the hold with a lantern. He stood over them and stared coldly from one to the other.

"Ironed like thieves," he said with a sneer. "It would delight the heart of your grandfather, old Clarette, boy, or your English father, to see you so, wouldn't it?"

"They would be glad to think that I have suffered something for my country."

"Your country!" snarled Danvers. "Bah, that nest of rats which you call a Congress will be broken up before long; the arch-traitor, Washington, will dangle from the end of a rope, while his tatterdemalions will be hunted through the woods like foxes."

"That was said long ago," replied Ethan. "But it is all as far from accomplishment as ever. The American people will never bow the knee to a king's will again."

Danvers had not yet overcome his anger of the day, and now he seemed upon the point of bursting into a blaze of fury. But with an effort he calmed himself; flashing the rays of the lantern into Ethan's face, he said:

"Boy, somehow or other you have the

knack of angering me, and when people anger me they are in danger, especially when they are enemies to the king. In certain crises I even possess the legal power of life and death; and were I so minded I could string you from the rigging of this vessel. What do you say to that?"

"Nothing," returned Ethan, looking him unflinchingly in the eye.

"Ask me that question," said Longsword, "and, faith, I'll say plenty."

"Be still, you Irish hound!" hissed the spy; "or I'll have you stretched across a grating, and let you see how the boatswain can use the cat."

"Arrah, don't go to any bother on my account," said the dragoon coolly. "I am willing enough to believe that the gentleman is an artist wid the cat-o'-nine-tails. Your word, sir, is enough for me."

But Danvers paid no attention to him. Bending over Ethan, he said:

"For the last time, will you tell me where the dispatch is hidden?"

"For the last time," said Ethan boldly, "I answer that I do not know."

The emissary of the crown remained staring in his face for a moment; then he turned away; his footsteps sounded upon the ladder, the hatch above was closed and they were left once more in darkness.

CHAPTER XIII

HOW THE SPY LOST HIS PRISONERS

In the pale dawn of the early morning the tender dropped anchor in a small cove, and the two prisoners were brought upon the deck. The leg irons had been removed, but their arms were still chained behind them.

Once more they were placed in a small boat, and were rowed ashore. Under guard of Danvers and a couple of seamen they were marched through the streets of a small, poor-looking town, and at last brought to a halt before a gloomy, half-ruined stone building. Danvers knocked loudly upon the door.

"This," said he, turning to Ethan and Longsword as he waited for the door to be opened, "is to be your place of residence until such time as you make up your mind to tell me what has become of the dispatch."

"Have you not said that you thought Captain Jones had it?"

"But the Lascar said that you were to deliver it to the earl; and I think that that was

why the landing was made." The man paused a moment, then added with a great deal of eagerness in his voice, "Tell me, did you conceal it anywhere upon St. Mary's Isle before you were taken?"

"I have told you that I know nothing of the dispatch save that Siki took it from the cabin of the Ranger."

There was plain disbelief upon the face of the spy; but before he could make any reply, the door opened slightly, as though upon a chain, and a woman's face appeared—a bony, fierce-looking countenance with a mop of unkempt hair above it.

"What is wanted at this hour?" she demanded harshly.

"It's I, Meg," replied Danvers; "I've brought some lodgers for you."

The woman seemed to recognize the voice, for she at once threw the door wide, and stood before them. She was a huge, raw-boned creature, and looked as strong as a man; she was attired in a tattered gown, and a cloak was wound about her shoulders. Gazing sharply at the two prisoners, she burst into a grating chuckle.

"Yankees, eh," she said, as though highly pleased. "But, no," gazing at Longsword once more, "this one is Irish, even the scar does not hide that, though it covers the greater part of his face."

"I'll thank ye," growled the dragoon, "not to indulge in any personal remarks, mam."

The woman laughed gleefully, and wagged her head.

"The Irish all have tempers," she said, "but that don't do them any harm. I like them the better for it."

She then gave her attention to another examination of Ethan.

"This one is younger," she said, "but he'll give the most trouble; I can see it in his face. A strong room with a grated door will be needed here, Mr. Danvers," she chuckled. "If the young gentleman is not provided with these luxuries he may slip through my fingers."

"That must not happen," said Danvers, sharply. "None of your nonsense, Meg! Put them in a place where they will be safe."

"But that will cost more, Mr. Danvers," said the woman, with a grin, "a very great deal more, sir."

"Let it," returned Danvers, shortly. "But don't keep us standing here until wide daylight."

The woman favored him with no mild look; nevertheless she did as she was bidden. A moment later they found themselves in a narrow, low-ceilinged room, cluttered with broken furniture and cooking utensils; then the woman opened a heavy door, disclosing a flight of steep steps leading into a deep cellar; descending these, Meg still leading the way and holding a reeking oil lamp above her head, they brought up before a wall of massive stone work into which were set some heavy grated doors of iron.

"I love to look at them," cried the woman, setting the lamp upon the floor and fumbling at her belt for the bunch of keys that hung there. "Ah, they are beautiful doors, as safe and as strong as any in Europe. Any one whom they ever closed upon has been held as fast as a rat in a trap. Not one has ever escaped. The great noble whose private prison this was in the old days, Mr. Danvers, knew how to build. Ah, yes, indeed. But," with a chuckle, "he never dreamed how his handi-

work was to bring me my living long years after he was in his grave. Oh, no, he never knew that."

She unlocked the door before which she stood, and slowly swung it open, creaking and groaning. Then she stood aside and bowed mockingly to Ethan.

"Enter," she invited with a grin. "Enter, my young Yankee, and never hope to leave this pretty cell until Mr. Danvers gives me the word."

The boy glanced into the dungeon; the pale light of the lamp showed that the walls were of rough stone, and that years of dampness had made them a hideous, slimy black. A rat scurried across the floor as the light rays penetrated; there were no windows and no furniture of any sort, not even a stool. In one corner was a heap of foul-looking straw, presumably to be used as a bed.

Ethan hesitated upon the threshold of this den, and the woman laughed.

"What!" she cried. "You don't seem pleased. Perhaps my lord would like a rug upon the floor and paintings upon the walls."

"You see what is in store for you," said

Danvers. "And you'll remain here until you tell me what you have done with the dispatch."

Then the spy made a sign; the seamen from the schooner pushed the boy roughly into the dungeon. Longsword was about to follow, but Meg prevented him.

"Oh, no," she cried with her mirthless laugh. "I never have two together. Mischief is apt to be plotted that way. Here is your room, my brave Irelander; it is just next door. You may talk as much as you like. But I'll give you no chance to join your strength. Oh, no, no."

Another door was swung open and Longsword stepped into a cell as damp and as unwholesome as Ethan's. The irons were then taken from their arms and the doors were securely locked; and as they stood staring through the gratings they saw Meg pick up her lamp and prepare to lead the men from the cellar.

"Have you much smuggled goods in the place just now, Meg?" said the spy, looking about.

"Ah, Mr. Danvers, sir, you will have your

little joke. The king's revenue never loses anything through me, as you know."

Danvers laughed.

"You have changed your way of making a living, then," said he. "When I was on the cutter that patrolled this coast there was no hiding place that required more watching than this."

He did not wait for the woman's reply, but turned to the dungeon door behind which Ethan stood and said :

"For the last time, will you answer ?"

"I have nothing to say," answered the boy.

"In a week I will return," said the spy. "Let us see how you stand this place. I fancy that by that time you will be ready to tell me anything I desire to know."

And with a disagreeable laugh he followed the others. Ethan heard the stamping of their feet as they climbed the stairs ; the light from the receding lamp flickered dimly along the stone passage ; then a door slammed heavily and all was dark.

"Well," called the voice of Longsword, "what do ye think of this, Master Ethan ?"

"It looks as though we were in for it, Shamus," answered Ethan.

Longsword rattled at the grated door of his cell and laughed.

"It was hung here to stay, sure enough," he said. "It would take a blast of powder to budge it."

"Have you any rats over there with you?" asked Ethan, after a time.

"Faith and I have; I can see a dozen pairs of little, red, shining eyes looking at me from the corners now." Longsword stamped heavily upon the stone floor and then chuckled. "Sure they are easy frightened, though. They run off at a sound."

The day passed slowly. They became heavy-eyed and weary of talking through the darkness, and stretching themselves upon the damp floor they slept. They were awakened by the rays of the woman's lamp shining in upon them. Meg stood in the passage without, and in her hands were some mouldy, hard-looking crusts, and two cracked stone jugs containing water.

"Good-evening, my gallant rebels," she saluted, grinning.

"Is it evening?" asked Longsword, his eyes blinking at the light.

"Ay, that it is; and I've brought your suppers." She passed the bread and water through small openings at the bottoms of their cell doors. "Bread and water," she chuckled. "Hah, you'll not grow very plump upon such fare as that."

"Plump," growled the Irish dragoon, regarding the crust in his hand with high disfavor. "Why a rat would starve upon such stuff. And it's as hard as a block of wood."

He hammered the bread against the wall as he spoke; it gave out a sound not unlike that which a block of wood would give. The woman writhed with laughter.

"Ah, you are a rogue, I can see that," she cried. "And like all the Irish, you will joke. But this one," and she turned to the door of Ethan's cell, "is different."

Somehow the laughter had gone out of her voice now, and she held up the lamp so that she might get a better view. Ethan stood silently leaning against the damp wall, and her eyes snapped with dislike as she regarded him.

"This is the sullen one," she continued. "This is the one who is thinking—thinking, always thinking how he can give me trouble. But I'll tame your spirit, my lad, if you are here long. I've done it with your betters when the smugglers brought them here for safe keeping. So don't be high and mighty with me or you'll rue it."

Ethan made no answer; he stood watching her quietly, and this seemed to rouse her anger; she went muttering away, after a space, and once more left them in darkness.

They grew to know when morning and evening came, for the woman always brought them the bread and water at these times. And with each visit her spite against Ethan seemed to increase; the silence of the young American seemed to anger her beyond measure; once she thrust her arm through the grating and struck at him.

"Faith and you're no favorite of hers," chuckled Longsword, when Ethan told him of this after the woman had gone. "It's too select ye are for her. She seems to like her boarders to be talkative and sociable."

But the incident gave Ethan an idea. They

had been confined in this unwholesome underground den for a week, and the boy had become almost desperate, and was inclined to try almost anything that gave even the faintest hope of escape.

The next time the woman came with their food, he made it a point to stand close to the grating, silent, cold-mannered, watchful. He could see Meg's eyes snap with anger as she glanced in at him. She shoved the food into his cell; then in a sudden fit of cat-like fury she thrust her arm through the grating once more and aimed a blow at him.

Like lightning the boy grasped her by the wrist, and throwing the full weight of his sinewy young body into the effort, he dragged her close against the cell door and held her fast. She struggled and fought like a tigress, but it was useless. He had but to wrench her arm slightly backward in order to bring a shriek from her.

"Let me go," she panted, glaring through the grating at him in a fury. "Let me go, I say."

"I will when you unlock this door."

"Let go," cried Meg, resuming her frantic

struggles. But a backward twitch of the fast held arm brought a scream of pain from her, and she was quiet once more.

"The key," demanded Ethan, firmly. "Unlock the door."

"I have no key."

"I see it among those at your belt," said Ethan.

With a snarl, Meg whipped out a murderous looking knife with her free hand, and reaching through the grating made a lunge at him. But, held as she was, she could not touch him, and another severe twist at the arm caused her to drop the knife and writhe with pain.

By this time Longsword was storming up and down in his cell. He could hear what they said, but, because of his situation, could not see anything of what was transpiring; his repeated calls to Ethan received no answer, for Ethan was too engrossed in his work to heed him.

"Once more," said he, ignoring the woman's cries, "give me the key."

"I can't reach it," she said. "Let my arm go and I'll give it to you."

"You'll give it to me now," he replied steadily.

"I'll give you my word," she whimpered.

But he knew better than to let slip his advantage; for once free she would laugh at him. So he persisted in his demand, his strong fingers clasped like steel about her wrist; and finally, groaning and lamenting the fate that would be meted out to her by Danvers, she selected the key from the bunch at her belt, fitted it in the lock and turned it. Slowly the door swung open, then Ethan released her and sprang out into the passage.

"Hurra!" shouted Longsword, as he caught sight of him. "Well done, Master Ethan."

"Now the other key," said the youthful American.

The woman hesitated, casting a look at the knife upon the floor; but Ethan kicked it beyond her reach and snatched the keys. She then sullenly indicated the one that opened Longsword's dungeon, and in a moment the Irish ex-dragoon was free also.

But scarcely had the latter executed the first intricate steps of a joyful Irish jig upon the flags of the passage, when there came the

sound of a closing door from above, followed by footfalls upon the floor directly over their heads. The woman uttered a cry of delight.

"They have come!" she cried.

"Whom?" asked Ethan.

"Mr. Danvers and his men," she answered exultantly. "This was the day which he had set for a visit to you."

"Caught," cried Longsword, his hands clinching and his tall raw-boned body growing tense for the struggle which he knew was sure to come.

"Ay, caught like rats!" chuckled the woman. "You thought to give me the slip, did you?" to Ethan. "But you are going to fail. I'll have you here for many a day yet; and I'll be even with you for the little trick you played upon me just now."

"What's to be done?" asked Ethan of the dragoon.

"Fight," answered that worthy with great promptness.

Ethan smiled.

"Good for you, old fire eater," he said. "So we will. There may not be so many of them after all."

"But they are armed, and we have nothing but our bare hands," mourned Longsword.

"But we'll have the advantage of a surprise," said Ethan.

All hope of this advantage, however, was blasted a moment later, for the woman, upon hearing the boy's words, uttered a warning shriek that rang through the cellar with ear splitting shrillness.

Instantly there came a trampling of feet upon the floor above, and Meg laughed in their faces triumphantly. But the laugh had scarcely died upon her lips when Longsword pushed her into one of the open cells and closed and locked the door.

"Now, then," cried Ethan, "let's meet them at the foot of the stairs."

As he spoke he kicked over the lamp, plunging the cellar into complete darkness. As they reached the foot of the stairs the door at the top opened, and the yellow rays of a candle, in the hands of Danvers, dimly lit up the narrow way. Ethan drew Longsword under the stairs out of sight.

"Hello," called the British spy. "What is the matter?"

The cries of the woman from the dungeon and the rattling of the grated door answered him.

"Something is wrong," said he, hurriedly. "Come along, two of you; the other two remain here, and keep your eyes open."

As Danvers led the way into the cellar, Ethan nudged Longsword.

"Only two in the room above," said he in a whisper.

"One apiece," said the grim dragoon with a chuckle.

Danvers and the two seamen passed quickly along toward the dungeons; instantly Ethan and his companion were out of their hiding-place and softly climbing the stairs. When they reached the top, they suddenly flung open the door and leaped into the room. In the middle of the floor stood the two remaining sailors from the tender; and before they could recover from the surprise which the sudden appearance of the prisoners occasioned, they were beaten down by a series of swift stunning blows. Then Ethan and Longsword pushed into the street and went speeding away through the silent town toward the sea.

CHAPTER XIV

HOW ETHAN AND LONGSWORD TOOK THE SCHOONER

They ran for some little time, and then Ethan looked back and saw no signs of pursuit.

"Take it easy," said he to Longsword. "There is no one after us."

"There will be in a few minutes," panted the Irishman, distrustfully. "They'll lose no time, sure, when they find which way we've gone."

However, they slackened their pace, but still headed toward the sea.

"We must get a boat," said Ethan. "It's our only hope. To be seen ashore means arrest; and this part of the coast is too thickly populated for hiding."

"You are right," answered Longsword. "We'll have to get afloat; it's very little chance we'll have to do anything but starve; but if we can get across the channel into Ireland, I'll go bail that we'll be safe enough.

There is many a colleen or gossoon that would hide us away, if it was only because we are enemies of the Saxon."

A few moments later Ethan remarked, "We are near the wharf where we landed; see that tall signal mast; I remember passing it."

"Sure enough," said Longsword; "and here is the wharf."

It was a stout wooden pier built out into the cove for some distance; almost directly opposite it, about a musket shot away, were the lights of the schooner that had brought them to the town. They stood at the head of the pier for some moments; then Ethan said, suddenly,

"I have an idea."

"What is it?"

"Danvers and his men must have landed at this pier; and if so we'll be sure to find their boat at the end of it."

"Bravo!" breathed Longsword. "Sure, ye have a clear head on your shoulders, Master Ethan, so ye have."

"Shall we try for it?"

"We shall, more power to us!"

They walked slowly down the pier; as they neared the end Longsword caught Ethan by the arm.

"Sh-h!" warned he.

"What is it?" asked the boy.

"There is some one beyant there."

Ethan strained his eyes through the darkness, and at last he made out the shadowy forms of several men standing at the end of the pier.

"A guard over the boat," he whispered to the Irish dragoon.

"That Danvers is a suspicious bla'guard," grumbled Longsword. "Sure here we have sorra the weapon—not even a lump of a stick—and we have the luck to come across a couple of able bodied lads wid cutlasses and pistols, I have no doubt."

"Those we knocked down a few moments ago had the same," said Ethan evenly. "And we had no trouble in disposing of them."

"Right! Ah, but it's yourself that's your father's son, me lad."

They crept softly down the pier; at one side was a huge fisherman's net hung upon a frame to dry; they placed this between them-

selves and the seamen from the schooner so that they might not detect any movement in the shadow. As they drew nearer they could hear the sailors' voices.

"A quiet night, mate," said one.

"Yes," answered the other, "quiet enough. But I'd rather spend it in my hammock than watching the lights on the water."

"I wonder what it is that this government fellow Danvers is up to."

"I don't know. I don't even think the skipper knows."

"He must be well thought of at the admiralty, shipmate, to have a schooner placed at his service like this."

"Ay! You're right there. But it's government work he's on; those two prisoners he took on St. Mary's Isle seem mighty important to him."

"Did you hear where he took 'em? Up to old Meg Rawlins'. She's the widow of old Rawlins the smuggler; Ben Kaye was in the party that went there; he said the boy and the Irishman were locked in cells in the underground vault where Rawlins used to hide his 'run' goods."

"I wonder why he didn't take 'em to a reg'lar government prison?"

"Private reasons, I guess. These secret service agents are queer fish, mate."

The men continued to talk in the same strain for some little time. Ethan and Longsword crouched behind the hanging net and listened.

"I say," remarked one, at last, "suppose we take a walk up the pier and see if they are coming. My eyes are closing for want of sleep."

"But who'll watch the boat?"

"Oh, let it take care of itself. There is no one awake here in this sleepy old town. And then who wants a few old government cutlasses and pistols?"

"Come along, then, mate."

The two seamen started up the pier; and as they disappeared in the shadows, Ethan and the Irish soldier crept from behind the net.

"Cutlasses and pistols in the boat," whispered Longsword with a joyous chuckle.

"It couldn't be better," said Ethan. "In with you, now; and we'll push off."

They clambered into the jolly-boat that was tied to a ring in the wharf log. Ethan cast off, placed the blade of an oar against one of the piles, and with a strong shove sent the craft well clear of the pier. But they had scarcely placed the oars into the rowlocks and settled themselves for the pull out of the cove when they heard running feet coming down the pier and the sound of angry voices.

"It's Danvers!" cried Ethan. "Pull, Shamus!"

They bent to their oars manfully and the jolly-boat shot away from the wharf, just as a shadowy group appeared through the darkness.

"The boat!" cried the voice of Danvers. "It's gone!"

"There she is, sir," said a seaman, pointing, "and dowse my tops if your prisoners ain't in her."

With an inarticulate cry of rage Danvers whipped out a pistol.

"Stop!" he shouted.

"Pull hard," said Ethan coolly to Longsword.

"Hard it is," came the voice of the ex-

dragoon, as his powerful arms and shoulders labored at the oars.

Seeing that no attention was paid to his command, Danvers raised his pistol and fired. The flash and report lit and wakened the night; then the ping-g-g of the bullet came to the ears of the two in the boat as it went past them. A series of quick, snapping shots followed as the seamen also discharged their pieces. When the steady splash of the oars in the water told the British emissary that the shots had been ineffective, he shouted in a voice that could be plainly heard by the two rowers:

"Boats! After them!"

"There are no boats, sir, except those of the fishermen around on the other side of the inlet."

"Lead the way then and show me where they are. We'll make the schooner, and we'll soon overhaul these Yankees."

Ethan signaled Longsword silently to stop pulling, and the dragoon obeyed. Running feet could be heard thudding dully upon the planking of the pier.

"Did you hear that?" asked the boy.

"I did, faith," answered Longsword. "And he speaks the truth. Let them get out to the schooner and it's all up with us. There's a good breeze blowing and these clouds will not hang before the moon long. So wid the wind in their sails and floods of light to see by, we can't escape them."

Ethan felt with his foot for the cutlasses and pistols that lay in the stern.

"Could we prevent them gaining the schooner?" he asked.

"All you want is encouragement," declared Longsword, "and you'd face an army. No, Master Ethan, we couldn't stop them. Ye know that I'm never anyways backward in a fight; but, faith, this would be mere folly, so it would."

There was a silence, during which they resumed pulling. At length Ethan dropped his oars and whirled about, facing the dragoon.

"I have it!" he cried.

"Ye have what?"

"The solution. We'll take the schooner!"

"Boy, dear, are ye mad?" gasped the astonished Irishman.

"Not a bit of it," said the lad excitedly. "Listen. There were only about ten men in the vessel all told. There were four with Danvers and two upon the pier. That makes six, and leaves only four on the schooner."

Longsword drew in a long, deep breath and then said:

"Good! But let's look to the weapons before we begin."

They examined the pistols and found there were four of them; they were ready charged and primed; the cutlasses were of the short-bladed "hanger" type of the British navy.

"Sure, what makes people turn out such weeney little blades?" said Longsword. "Faith, Master Ethan, these are not a man's size at all, at all. I like a sword a good three feet long, and wid some weight in it, faix."

"I suppose you'll have to do with what we can find here, old fire-eater," smiled Ethan. "These cutlasses are not so bad for close work. They are short, but remember the Romans conquered the world with a short sword."

"If they'd had long ones they'd done the job in half the time," said Longsword.

"Ready?" asked the boy.

"Ready," answered the dragoon.

They headed for the schooner and began to pull swiftly, but softly. On shore all was silent, and darkness still hung pall-like over the water, though the heavy clouds were visibly thinning before the wind, and here and there a silver spot glimmered among them.

The lights of the schooner became more and more distinct; and at length they were under her bow, clinging to the chains, and listening. The low murmur of voices came from the after part of the vessel, but forward all was still.

"It's going to be easy work," said Ethan.

They made fast the jolly-boat to the chains, then thrust the loaded pistols into their belts. Ethan, with a naked cutlass between his teeth, went up the side like a cat; and in a moment the tall Irishman stood beside him on the schooner's deck.

"Ahoy," suddenly called a startled voice from the after deck. "Who's that for'ard?"

"Don't answer," breathed Ethan.

They maintained silence; then came the voice once more.

"Is that you, Mr. Blake?"

No answer.

"I don't see anything," said a second voice, after a pause.

"Well, I do. Some one came over the side just now; it looked like two, but I can see only one, now."

"Better go below, and sing out to the skipper."

"Not till I'm sure about what or who it is."

Footsteps advanced; from behind the cabin top two forms came into view.

"Now," breathed Ethan Carlyle.

"I'm right here, wid ye," answered Longsword in the same low tone.

The sailors of the schooner had advanced no more than a dozen steps when the two desperate boarders bounded upon them, and the cold barrel of a pistol pressed against the forehead of each.

"Not a word," said Longsword, harshly.

"Who are you?" asked one of the startled men.

"Never mind that," said Ethan. "Shamus, tie them up."

The grim dragoon stuck his pistol in his

belt : with the keen edge of his cutlass he cut some ropes, and in a few moments both men were securely lashed to the mainmast, back to back.

"A piece of sail cloth would do for a gag," said Ethan.

"And here is just the thing," said Longsword as he picked up a topsail, apparently used as a tarpaulin. He cut some broad strips from this ; and despite the protests of the seamen, these were bound tightly over their mouths.

"Keep a watch over them," said Ethan to his companion, after all was finished.

"Where are you going?" asked the other.

"Below. I think I'll treat the commander of the schooner to a small surprise."

Longsword made no comment, though his face, had Ethan been able to see it, took on an anxious expression. The youthful American advanced, pistol and hanger in hand, to the companionway. A glimmer attracted his attention, and looking down through a small open skylight he saw two men at the cabin table, engaged in an earnest conversation.

The capture of the watch had been accom-

plished with almost no noise, so the two below were unconscious of what had taken place.

Softly Ethan descended the companion ladder and reached the cabin door. He paused a moment listening, and heard one of the men say,

"I tell you, Blake, it is growing desperate. British shipping is in the greatest danger. That rascal Paul Jones is a menace to the entire coast. The Drake is out after him, and I hope she comes up with him soon."

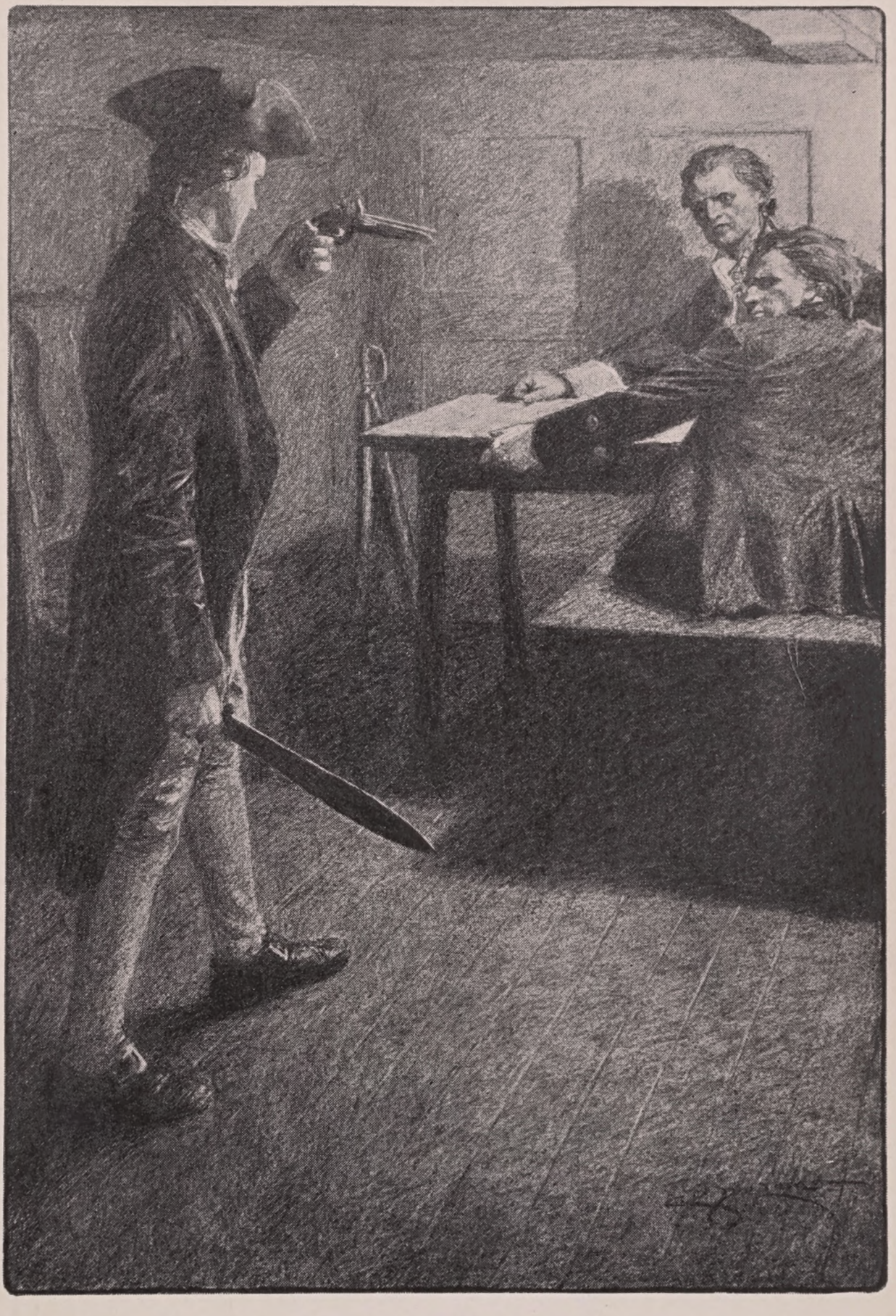
"You may be correct," said the second voice, "but my opinion, Captain Spencer, is that there is not a Yankee nearer to us this minute than the coast of France."

The door opened at that exact moment, and the stalwart form of Ethan Carlyle stood before them, his pistol pointed at their heads and his hanger ready in his hand.

"You are wrong in that, sir," remarked the lad coolly; "for here is one at your side."

"What does this mean?" exclaimed Captain Spencer, leaping up.

"It means that you are my prisoners," observed Ethan, in an even tone. "Sit down



ETHAN CARLYLE STOOD BEFORE THEM

and don't become excited. It will do no good."

"Draw, Blake," roared the schooner's captain, as he flashed out his blade. But he had scarcely lifted it when the sword of the young American swept downward like a flash and knocked it from his hand; then a blow from the flat of the weapon sent him back against the cabin wall.

"The next effort at resistance," said Ethan, "will meet with a shot from this," and he presented the pistol once more.

"What do you want, boy?" demanded Blake, as he stood hesitating, his hand upon his sword.

"I want you to take your belt and tie the captain's hands behind him."

"I'll not do it," cried Blake.

"I'll give you just one minute to make up your mind," said Ethan.

The mate of the British schooner looked into the boy's set, determined face: nothing but resolve were in the quiet eyes; and so the man reluctantly did as he was commanded. Then Ethan called to the dragoon and Longsword came down into the cabin with a couple

of lengths of rope; in a short time the two officers were safely bound, and the cabin ransacked for arms; all the muskets, pistols and other things of the sort were taken upon deck; then the cabin was locked with the glowering officers within it.

"Now then, look alive," cried Ethan as they reached the deck once more.

Across the waters of the cove stole a faint thread of light; the wind had continued to blow steadily, and the clouds had almost drifted off the face of the moon.

"Hark!" said Longsword, lifting a silencing hand.

From the direction of the shore came the steady "creak, creak" of oars; across the trail of moonlight a large boat was seen to dart, coming toward the schooner.

"It's Danvers and the rest of the men," cried Ethan.

"They'll be here before we can get up the anchor," said Longsword.

"Then we'll impress help," said Ethan briefly. Stepping to the sides of the men lashed to the mast he cut their bonds with his hanger.

"Now then, my lads," said he, "lend a hand at the capstan."

For a moment the men hesitated; they had caught sight of the advancing boat, and knew that it meant help; but the Irish dragoon's pistol poked itself into their faces without any parleying, and in another instant the capstan was clanking merrily, and the heavy anchor was being drawn from the bottom of the cove. Then the seamen lent a reluctant hand at hoisting the mainsail and the jibs. As the wheel whirled under the skilful hands of Ethan Carlyle, the hanging canvas filled and the foot of the schooner broke the first ripple on her way seaward.

The boat was now near at hand, and the voice of Danvers came booming across the water.

"Schooner, ahoy."

"Ahoy, the boat," was Ethan's answer as he leaned his weight upon the wheel and watched the press of wind in the sheets with satisfaction.

"Heave to," shouted Danvers. "What do you mean by this, Spencer?"

Another sail went up on the schooner and

filled; the handy little craft responded to this increased speed instantly and went flowing ahead, with a wake of spume behind her.

The moon had just slipped from behind a cloud and lit up the cove with the brilliancy of day. Danvers was standing up in the stern of the boat. With a cry of rage he saw his vessel filling rapidly away; he saw Ethan at the wheel waving a mocking hand to him; he saw the Irish dragoon, with a brace of pistols, hovering over the two English seamen in the waist. Then the moon hid her face once more; the creaking of blocks came to his ears, and the wash of the waters as the flying vessel dashed it from her bow. Danvers shook his fist in the direction of the sound and his voice reached the ears of Ethan through the darkness.

"You have the best of it this time. But he laughs best who laughs last, my lad!"

CHAPTER XV

HOW THE SCHOONER CAME UPON THE DRAKE IN THE DARKNESS

WITHIN a few hours the schooner was well out in the channel and bowling along at a spanking pace; the two seamen, now that there was no immediate hope of rescue, as the boat had promised, were quiet and willing enough to work the vessel under her new masters. But Longsword kept his eye upon them for all that; he had no confidence in the faith of captured men; long experience in warfare had taught him that they were only to be depended upon when they could not help themselves.

"Is it for Ireland you'll be making?" asked the trooper of Ethan, who still held the wheel.

"I don't see the need of that, now," said the lad, thoughtfully. "It was a good idea enough when we had only an open boat; but now that we have a vessel like this what is the matter with taking her up through the

channel and running her into some French port?"

"Nothing in the world," answered Longsword with great promptness. He seemed vastly taken by the notion, but for all that, added: "But there will be many British ships of war in these waters now, Master Ethan, looking for the Ranger."

"This little craft is a clean, free sailor," said the boy. "If we come upon an enemy we can run for it."

"And we can make a bit of a fight, too," said the Irishman. "There are two six-pounders in the bow, and the four carronades, beyant there, look as though they would give good service, faith."

Ethan laughed.

"But we have no gun crews, Longsword," protested he.

The Celt scratched his head.

"That's so, sure," he admitted. "I never once thought of that."

They held a course up the channel all night; the moon rode grandly in the starlit heavens, and bathed the chopping waters with radiance. But toward morning her glory waned,

and the darkness that ensued was of that complete pall-like sort that usually precedes dawn.

Then a fog settled slowly down—the wet, clinging mist that is common in those waters, and they sailed on through it, chilled and silent. Deeper and thicker it grew as the moments went by; they had sighted no vessel since they had run out; but now, with the suddenness of magic, the gleaming bow lights of a large ship appeared ahead like the angry eyes of some sea monster glaring upon them.

Ethan threw the wheel down hard; the nose of the schooner swung about in answer and she plunged across the bow of the ship like a ghost. A startled cry came from the larger vessel's deck, then followed a hubbub of sounds; and at last a voice hailed them.

"Ahoy! What vessel is that?"

The creaking of the yards of the ship showed that she was about to investigate the schooner; but at the hail, Ethan and Shamus O'Moore looked at one another blankly.

"I never thought to ask the name of this craft," said the boy.

"Nor I," answered the Irishman, "but we'll know in a minute, faith."

"Ahoy," came from the ship, which had run off some little distance before her yards could be dressed to meet the change of course. She was now looming up huge and grim through the mists of the early morning. "What ship is that?"

"Answer," Longsword said to one of the British seamen.

The man hesitated sullenly: but the fierce, crushing grip that the dragoon suddenly put upon his shoulder caused him to call out at the top of his voice:

"His Majesty's schooner, Condor."

The ship was now very close at hand, indeed the two vessels were within easy pistol shot of each other.

"This is the frigate, Drake," came the voice from the ship deck. "Who's your commander?"

"Captain Spencer."

"Have you run across any other vessel since dark?"

"No," answered the sailor at Longsword's prompting.

"We are looking for the pirate, Paul Jones; he's reported to be in these waters. Look out for him."

There was then a sharp altercation between the speaker and another person who appeared to have just come upon deck. After a moment the new voice cried harshly: "Condor, ahoy!"

"Ahoy!" answered Ethan.

"Heave to; I'm coming aboard of you."

"We can't have him do that," said the boy to Longsword.

"The moment he set foot on this deck, the men would tell him everything," agreed the Irish soldier.

"Clap on more sail," said Ethan; "we'll run for it."

The men, at Longsword's stern command, set the foresail and a couple of topsails; under the increased pressure, the Condor drew away, and the Drake faded to a blur and at last the mist swallowed her up all altogether.

"Put out all the lights," called Ethan. "We can give her the slip in this fog."

Longsword promptly extinguished all the lanterns; shouts from the Drake came ever

more dimly through the night; a drum throbbed dully.

"They are beating to quarters," said Ethan.

"Let them," laughed Longsword. "Sure if they begin firing in a fog like this it's only waste good powder they'll be doing."

Ethan had changed the course of the Condor until she stood as before the meeting; the wind blew briskly once more and the fog began to lift before it. The schooner had made some little distance before this died away, and the mist settled once more. Nothing was seen of the British ship.

"We have eluded them very nicely," laughed Ethan, as he gazed into the gray wall behind them, vainly endeavoring to catch a glimpse of the Englishman.

He had no sooner uttered these words than a shout rang out from Longsword in the bow. Whirling about, his hand upon the butt of a pistol, he was dumbfounded to see the red and green bow lights glaring at the schooner for the second time that night.

"The Drake once more," cried Longsword in amazement.

"It can't be," answered Ethan, easing the

schooner a trifle. "We left the Drake behind us."

"You've been sailing in a circle," shouted one of the English seamen, exultantly. "The Drake is a smart craft, and she's got you now."

"Ahoy!" came through the gloom of the misty morning. "What craft is that?"

"British schooner Condor," cried the sailor before he could be prevented. "What ship is that?"

Ethan heard the man chuckle as he waited for the expected answer. But the chuckle died in the British tar's throat when the voice from the newcomer shouted,

"The American sloop of war Ranger; heave to, or I'll blow you out of the water!"

CHAPTER XVI

HOW THE RANGER FOUGHT THE DRAKE

WITH cries of joy both Ethan and Longsword heard these welcome words. Ethan brought the schooner to ; in a few moments a boat was lowered and rowed away from the American ship. When Wallingford, third lieutenant of the Ranger, climbed over the schooner's rail he was astonished to find himself grasped by the hand.

"What, Carlyle," he cried in amazement.

"None other," laughed the boy. "You aren't rid of me yet, you see."

"We thought you taken by the enemy on St. Mary's Isle."

"So I was ; but it's a long story and will keep. You'd better have some men sent on board to take charge of this craft. It's a prize that Longsword and I took some distance up the coast."

Lieutenant Wallingford looked his surprise, but said nothing. A crew was soon placed on

board the Condor, and Ethan and the Irish dragoon were taken to the Ranger.

John Paul Jones was undisguisedly delighted at the unexpected return of the two adventurers. He shook their hands and expressed his pleasure warmly.

"We are headed for Carrickfergus," he said. "We understand that the frigate Drake has orders to come out after us."

"She is already out," said Ethan eagerly. "We met her and slipped away from her less than an hour ago."

"Hah!" said the commander of the Ranger, "then the struggle may be nearer at hand than I fancied."

He took Ethan down into the cabin, and listened to the news which the lad had of the dispatch.

"The villain," cried the captain, with flushed face, when he heard of Danvers' charge against Ethan and himself regarding the paper. "It will go hard with him if I ever come within reach of him."

They talked for some time; the Ranger was once more under way and her nose was headed for Carrickfergus as before. Ethan

and Longsword slept well that morning after they turned in, and awoke just as the Ranger ran into the outer harbor of the Irish port.

The Drake was there, having arrived some hours earlier, and just as Ethan came on deck her captain was sending off a boat to the Ranger to find out what she was. The boat was in charge of a hectoring British lieutenant, and as it came alongside the American vessel he cried sharply,

"Now you, sir, what ship is this?"

There came no answer from the Ranger; the lieutenant saw a long line of grinning faces looking down at him over her rail and he grew purple with rage.

"You unmannerly rascals," he roared, "I'll teach you respect to a king's officer."

He gave a command to his men; they dropped their oars, seized their arms and followed him up the Ranger's side. The vessel's ports were closed and the lieutenant had mistaken her for a saucy merchantman. But imagine his consternation when he found himself upon the deck of a fully armed ship and face to face with a smiling young officer who politely demanded his sword.

"What ship is this?" he demanded weakly.

"The Continental sloop of war, Ranger," answered John Paul Jones, still smiling. "I think your commander has been in search of us."

"He has," answered the lieutenant, filled with anger at the result of his own and his captain's lack of caution. "And he'll sink you now, sir, you may be sure."

"That remains to be seen."

The American looked toward the Drake, which was now hoisting her anchors and apparently preparing to come out, and added:

"The Drake seems a pretty ship, indeed, in daylight. I have only seen her once before, and that was under cover of night. She looks as though she would offer a very interesting battle indeed."

"You may be sure of that, sir," answered the British officer stiffly.

Both he and his boat's crew were disarmed and sent below; then their boat was cast off and the Ranger made ready for action. While this was being done Ethan cried suddenly to Captain Jones:

"Look there, sir!"

He pointed toward the British ship as he spoke; and the captain saw a number of boats containing soldiers, pulling out to her.

"Oh, Captain Burdon of the Drake is adding to his ship's company," commented he, evenly. "Well, perhaps he'll need them."

"They look like volunteers, by their uniform," remarked Longsword.

In this the Irish dragoon was right. A Lieutenant William Dobbs had been engaged in recruiting a band for coast defense in the neighborhood of Carrickfergus; he had offered them to Captain Burdon for service upon the Drake at this crisis, and they had been accepted.

The regular ship's company of the frigate was one hundred and fifty officers and men; she carried two more guns than the Ranger, but they were lighter; and so the vessels were pretty evenly matched.

The Drake finally stood out to sea toward the Ranger; the wind was blowing toward the shore and her progress was rather slow. Captain Jones remarked quietly to Ethan,

"In an hour or less the story will be told. I trust that the Lascar, Siki, is aboard this

ship, as Danvers said; for after I take her I should very much like to question him."

Just then Longsword came aft with a serious look upon his face. Saluting he said,

"Captain dear, there's a ruction among the men, so there is."

"What do you mean?" asked the officer quickly.

"I mean that they are growling among themselves like a pack of sullen dogs for'ard, there. It shames me to say it, sir, but I fancy that they have little stomach for the fight."

The commander swept the deck of his ship with angry eye. The crew stood in groups, sullen and lowering; Lieutenants Simpson and Hall were upon the quarter-deck, and every action and word that they uttered seemed to add to the growing feeling among the men.

"This vessel is no match for a well set up frigate," said Simpson, in a voice that carried to the ears of his captain. "We've come out after prizes, and not to be slaughtered by the guns of men of war."

"The Drake carries more weight of metal

than we," agreed Hall, "and if I were in command of this ship I'd make a clean run for it. To wait for this frigate is to wait for plenty of hard knocks, little credit and no plunder."

With a few swift steps John Paul Jones was at his side; there had been a low murmur of approval from the seamen at these words of their officers; and the commander's eyes were stormy, and flashed menacingly as they rested upon his lieutenants' dogged faces.

"So, gentlemen," said he in a voice like ice, "I find you still at your old trick of demoralization, do I?"

"I don't understand you, sir," said Simpson drawing himself erect.

"Nor I, Captain Jones," said Hall.

"Then allow me to make my meaning plain. Since this ship sailed from Portsmouth you have been daily increasing in your insubordination. Things have come to such a pass that it almost seems necessary for me to consult you before issuing a command."

"A good captain always consults his officers," said Simpson with a thinly-veiled sneer.

"In spite of the protestations which I offered that day on St. Mary's Isle, you plundered the home of a defenseless woman. I submitted rather than risk a mutiny that would deprive my country of a valuable vessel. But if you think that I will continue to submit, you are very much mistaken."

Simpson and Hall exchanged glances and smiled. The captain saw this and his eyes flashed with a more dangerous light.

"You are inciting to mutiny in the face of the enemy," said he, still in the same cold, even voice. "And that is punishable by death."

The two men started, and the smiles fled from their faces.

"I order you to your stations and expect you to carry out my orders to the letter. At the slightest sign of disinclination upon your part to do so, I'll clap you in irons and take you to France for trial before the commissioners. To your posts, gentlemen."

The two officers, pale of face and furtive-eyed, went to their places at the batteries as commanded. John Paul Jones followed them with his eyes for a moment. Then he said to

Wallingford, who had stood by ready to support him in case of need,

"Mr. Wallingford, have the bos'en pipe all hands."

The hoarse call rang through the ship and all the seamen stood at attention. The commander spoke to them from his quarter-deck.

"Men of the Ranger," he said, "on this cruise we have taken many prizes and struck some good blows. We have made the British government fear us as it never feared ship before. But they have resolved to take us; they have said that we do not dare to stand and fight their armed ships man to man and gun for gun. The world has heard this, or at least that part of it which we care about; the young republic of the west is waiting to hear of the deeds of the ships which she sent to defy Britain in her own seas."

There was a visible stirring among the men; for the greater part they were mercenary mariners, men of many nations who had shipped for the booty alone; but there were many Yankees among them, and these felt the appeal of their chief.

"Shall it be said of us that the first vessel

of equal strength which we have met has daunted us?"

"No!" shouted a voice. And there was a murmur among the crew.

"Then I call upon you to help me fight this ship," cried the captain, in ringing tones. "Stand to your guns manfully, and I promise, in one hour, to give you victory."

A cheer swelled up and broke into a frantic hurrah; then with a wave of the hand the chief dismissed them to their stations.

"They will fight now," remarked Ethan to Longsword.

"They will, faith," said the Irish dragoon. "And it's little chance of defeat we have if they do their best, for there are some useful lads among them, Master Ethan."

John Paul Jones now stood out to sea and drew his foe as far away from shore as possible.

"In case he is defeated," said the commander to Ethan, "Burdon might escape back into the harbor if we fought too far in shore."

"Look at the yachts coming out with her," said the young American who had watched every movement of the Englishman.

Paul Jones laughed.

"They desire to be eye-witnesses of an English victory, doubtless. It is a pity to dash their hopes, but I'm afraid that we will be forced to do so."

When at last the British frigate had come within easy distance, she hailed.

"What vessel is that?" demanded Captain Burdon.

"The Ranger, Paul Jones, commander. We are waiting for you, so strip for the fight."

As he spoke the American captain gave a signal and the stars and stripes shot up to the masthead; then the helm was suddenly thrown up and the Ranger darted across the bows of the British vessel and poured a raking broadside into her. The captain of the Drake tried to bring the frigate across the Ranger's stern, but Paul Jones prevented this; the two ships were now yard arm to yard arm and poured a terrific fire into each other's rigging and hulls.

Ethan Carlyle, whose ability as a gunner had been discovered by Captain Jones long before, had charge of a six pounder in the bow. He and Longsword, stripped to the

waists, and all begrimed with powder smoke, served this piece with deadly effect.

In the heat of the battle the gallant young Lieutenant Wallingford rushed up to Ethan.

"Captain Jones desires you to try for her forerigging," panted he. "If we can cripple her badly aloft we'll make her strike."

Longsword had just rammed a charge into the gun, and Ethan sighted it coolly. A rain of musket shots was being poured into them by the soldier volunteers upon the Drake; but the young gunner paid no heed to this. Applying the match the gun roared redly; the foretop-gallant yard of the British ship splintered and hung down the mast in a tangle of rigging.

"Hurrah," yelled Longsword. "A fine shot, faith!"

"And placed in the right spot," said Wallingford. Almost as the words left his mouth, this brave young officer uttered a smothered groan, clasped both hands to his breast and sank into the arms of the Irish dragoon.

"Is he hit?" cried Ethan, anxiously, springing forward. "Is he badly wounded?"

"He have his death, sir," replied Long-

sword solemnly. "It's a musket-ball, and from the spot it struck, it split the boy's brave heart."

As he spoke the grim Irishman tenderly lowered the still, white form to the deck; then in silence, and with set, hard faces, he and Ethan Carlyle once more turned to the serving of the gun.

At length the Drake was little more than a wreck; her rigging and yards were a wilderness of broken spars and ropes; her canvas was in shreds and two flags had been shot away. Half her guns were dismounted and out of action, and forty of her crew were killed or disabled when at last she struck.

Ethan was with Captain Jones when he boarded the prize; when the prisoners were lined up for inspection they were bitterly disappointed to find that the Lascar was not among them. While Captain Jones was giving his attention to the repairing of the worst damages and the care of the wounded Ethan questioned the boatswain's mate of the defeated ship.

"A blackamoor, eh," said the man, thoughtfully. "Now let me see! Oh, yes! I re-

member. He was taken on board when we stopped in the harbor near St. Mary's Isle not so long ago. We kept him safely guarded and ironed, sir, for it was said that he was an important prisoner; but on our second day at Carrickfergus he gave us the slip, somehow, and none of us have seen anything of him since."

CHAPTER XVII

THE SECRET AGENT ONCE MORE

Lieutenant Simpson, as first officer of the Ranger, was placed in command of the Drake, and that vessel was taken in tow and the American man-of-war sailed in quest of more prizes along the Irish coast and then toward Brest.

Sighting a sail, one day, Captain Jones cut the Drake loose after instructing his first officer to make the best of his way into Brest. But Simpson, true to his instincts, changed his course to southward and Paul Jones was compelled to give up the pursuit of several promising prizes in order that he might come up with the captured frigate.

Incensed beyond measure by the insolence of Simpson, he placed the man under arrest, and the command of the Drake was given to Lieutenant Hall, who finally took her into port.

When they reached France once more they

discovered that a treaty of alliance between the colonies and that kingdom had been signed. The American ministers had been received at the French court; the French ambassador had left London, and the English envoy, Lord Stormont, had departed from France. War was on between these two great European powers, and in the heat of that great struggle the colonies at last had a chance to be free.

Once again Paul Jones, Ethan Carlyle and Longsword rode to Paris to consult with Dr. Franklin. They were warmly greeted by the sage, and he listened to their experiences with interest and appreciation.

"Captain Jones," he said at the conclusion, "there is nothing in the gift of your country too great for your deserving. In the name of the colonies, I thank you."

"I suppose," remarked Ethan, after a time, "that the lost dispatch is now valueless, seeing that the alliance has already been accomplished."

"On the contrary," said Dr. Franklin, "it is now more important that it should be recovered than ever. I have communicated with Congress, and a duplicate of the dispatch

has been sent me; it was by means of its contents that this treaty has been effected. But were the facts contained in the dispatch to come, even now, under the eyes of Lord North, such pressure would be brought upon France that she would drop all connection with us at once and again make a peace with England. Indeed, the fact that the information is in the way of being discovered, were the French aware of it, might be fatal. The dispatch must be recovered at all hazards."

As they sat in their lodgings that night Ethan told Longsword of this: and the Irish dragoon wrinkled his brow and looked infinitely wise.

"Politics," remarked he, sagely, "is a great thing, faith. Sure the statesmen are always burrowing under the ground and cutting it away from beneath each others' feet. It wouldn't surprise me if the loss of this dispatch should bring about the recall of the French fleets that have sailed for America, and the ruin of the hopes for liberty."

"Don't say that, Longsword," said Ethan, a pained look in his eyes. "I hate to even think of such a thing."

"If we could only come upon the bla'guard Lascar we might gain something by it. Oh, but it's him that's the fox; sure nobody can hold him, it seems."

"The fact that the Earl of Selkirk went away upon a journey soon after his interview with the Lascar troubles me," said Ethan. "It looks as though he had learned something of the paper and had set out to try to gain possession of it."

"True for ye, and it seems to me that Paris, somehow, is the place he would come for it."

"Paris! And why?"

"Sure, I don't know. But it presents itself to me that way, Master Ethan."

"Perhaps you may be right. This man Fochard is here, and it would not be at all surprising if he knew something of the matter."

"Suppose," suggested Longsword after a pause, "that we pay a visit to this gentleman in the Rue Constantine?"

"An excellent idea," cried Ethan. "And we will put it into operation at once."

They put on their heaviest clothing, for the night was a cold one in February, and set

forth. The hard frosty ground rang beneath their feet as they trudged along the rather gloomy streets. Turning into the Rue Constantine they had no trouble in finding the house of M. Fochard. The same little man in the spectacles and with the shining bald head opened the door upon the chain and looked out at them. Recognizing them at a single glance he cried:

"Oh, you rogues, so you have returned. A very nice trick that was to play upon an old clerk, was it not? Shame! I almost lost my place because of you. But you will not fool me again, no, no!"

"Is M. Fochard within?" asked Ethan.

"He is not, and would not see you if he were! You are rogues, monsieurs; and we have nothing to do with such here!" And with that, he clapped the door in their faces and left them standing in the darkness and cold.

"The old fellow seems angry," chuckled Longsword. "I suppose his employer hauled him over the coals for letting us in that night."

"There is no use in our trying again to-

night at any rate," said Ethan. "Are you cold, Shamus?" he continued after they had turned away and retraced their steps along the Rue Constantine.

"I am, faith!" answered the Irish soldier.

"There is a bright, clean looking coffee house across the way. Suppose we step in and take the chill off with some coffee and a little snack—say a buttered roll or something of that sort."

"A very thoughtful suggestion. Sure, nothing would please me better."

They crossed the street and entered the coffee house. Each had a cutlass hanging from his belt, and their foreign air at once attracted the attention of the people in the place. But they sought out a small table at the far end of the room and seating themselves quietly ordered and sipped their coffee and nibbled at the white rolls that were brought with it.

"A very respectable looking place," said Longsword as his eyes roved about, examining its patrons.

"Yes," answered Ethan. "And the coffee is excellent."

As they talked in low tones upon various

topics, the door opened and three men entered the room. One of them was queerly huddled up in a huge cloak; the others were lowering looking fellows, apparently of the class of cut-purses or bravos which infested the city at that time. They took seats at a side table near the door.

"There are three bla'guards, or I never saw any," declared Longsword to Ethan as he looked at the newcomers. "Sure and ye can see villainy written all over them."

"They are not very prepossessing looking persons at all events," admitted Ethan. He went on sipping his coffee for a time and then leaning toward his companion he said in a low tone, "They are watching us."

"No!" exclaimed Longsword, glaring at the trio.

"Don't stare so at them. Yes; it's true. The man in the cloak seems to be some one in authority; he pointed us out as soon as they came in; they have been furtively eyeing us ever since."

"I wonder why?" said Longsword, puzzled.

"I couldn't say. Perhaps because we are

Americans. I've noticed that that causes the French people to stare always, as we pass along the street."

The young American and his companion watched the three closely while pretending to inspect the room. The conversation of the men was carried on in a very low tone; their gestures were guarded; their whole manner was secret; and while they ate sparingly of the food placed before them they never took their eyes, so it seemed, from Ethan and Longsword. While deep in the observation of all this Ethan was surprised to hear a quiet voice say, almost in his ear:

"Our friends by the door seem like most peculiar people."

Ethan turned quickly, for the voice had a strangely familiar sound; and to his great astonishment he found himself looking into the smiling face of Monsieur Fochard. Longsword was equally astonished; the language was French and so of course he did not understand what the man said; but he recognized the features of the secret agent instantly. The man saw this and smiled and nodded.

"I had not thought," said he to Ethan, "to

see you again so soon. I fancied, monsieur, that you would be at St. Mary's Isle, awaiting the coming of Siki, the Lascar."

Ethan fancied that he detected a chuckle in the man's voice—a chuckle of intense satisfaction. But he made no reply and the agent went on:

"I forgive you for the deception which you allowed me to practice upon myself that night when you came to my house. It was a clever ruse, monsieur, and most remarkable for a boy of your years. My best man could scarcely excel it."

Ethan laughed.

"You do me too much honor, M. Fochard. It was chance that took me to your house, and chance that carried the matter on."

"Very modest—very commendable," said the other with a wave of his hand. "But I prefer to believe that it was a set plan; it would not do for Fochard to admit that he was outwitted by blind chance."

He had been sitting sipping his black coffee at a table directly behind; now he dragged his chair forward to theirs and sat twirling the heavy seals upon his watch guard. He

spent a few moments in silent contemplation of both ; then he asked :

" Would it be too much if I inquired how you learned that Siki had returned to Paris ? "

" I did not know that he had," returned Ethan.

The secret agent regarded him with a smile.

" My dear fellow," said he stretching his trim silk stockinged legs beneath the table, " how can you say that when the man sits before you ? "

As he spoke he made a gesture toward the three men at the door ; Ethan glanced at the man in the cloak ; he caught sight of a dark, long-fingered subtle looking hand which was thrust from beneath it. It was true ; this man must be the Lascar.

" You must not think to deceive me again, young gentleman," said Fochard. He re-arranged his elaborate shirt frill and the huge ruffles of lace which he wore at his wrists, and smiled. " There sits Siki, bravely before us," he continued. " But tell me what you think of the other two."

"They look to me like rascals," answered Ethan, promptly.

"Ah!" and the secret agent seemed greatly interested. "You have studied physiognomy then."

But Ethan shook his head.

"Ah! that is a pity! The study of the human countenance is a great and vital thing; all men, especially those engaged in duties that bring them into contact with the motives and secret doings of other men should study this grand science."

He seemed to be upon a subject which interested him greatly, and continued:

"By it we are forearmed, safeguarded. We at once know the tendencies of strangers, and so it saves us many disasters in our affairs; for those whom this philosophy warns us against we do not trust."

"I suppose not," answered Ethan, vaguely.

"It is a matter of great ease," went on the man, crossing his silk stockinged legs and smoothing his ruffles with one many-ringed hand, "to discover the tendencies of our friends there at the door, for they carry their vocations plainly writ upon their faces.

Note the leaner of the two Frenchmen—the pointed and protruding jaw, the outstanding ears, the eyes set close together, the low brow, the nose slightly hooked. It is a countenance whose message is unmistakable. To one who knows it cries out ceaselessly—beware, beware!"

Ethan nodded; science or no science he knew that the stranger spoke the truth.

"The other face," continued Fochard, "is of a decidedly lower type. Note the huge jaw, the small round head set upon the great torso, with scarcely the sign of a neck. This is a common sort of ruffian—one who will make much noise about his wrong-doing and be easily caught."

Ethan looked at the secret agent curiously; somehow he had the impression that the man's talk was for the purpose of gaining time; also that he desired the three at the table near the door to see them, apparently, earnestly engaged together. Drawing a large silver snuff-box from his waistcoat pocket Fochard took a dainty pinch and then offered it to Ethan and Longsword in turn. Upon their refusing he smiled and delicately ap-

plied the snuff to his nostrils; then he dusted the fallen grains from his clothing and put the box away.

"I think," said Ethan, "that you must have encountered these men before to know their characteristics so well. A single glance at the face does not tell so much."

The Frenchman gestured his admiration of this remark, and his jeweled hands sparkled in the candle-light.

"You Americans are keen and most practical," he said. "And for that reason," he went on, bending toward Ethan, "I am going to do something for you to-night which will surprise you much—and out of sheer admiration of your nation."

"Indeed."

"I have here a ring," and Fochard drew from his finger a sparkling circlet and held it up so that the light would fall upon it. "I am going to give it to you."

He noted the lad's look of surprise, and added with a smile:

"It is not because of the ring itself—oh, no. But the person who stands, with this ring upon the third finger of his right hand and

with the hand held so, at the great gate of Versailles at ten in the morning, will receive —a packet. Do you understand?"

"A packet," Ethan shot a keen glance at the man.

"Exactly—a packet sealed with great splotches of red wax."

"Ah!" The boy drew in a deep breath, and his eyes narrowed and began to burn.

"Ten thousand pounds is a great sum," and Fochard shrugged his fat shoulders. "But I am a Frenchman, and all Frenchmen love the Americans. For this reason I forego all hope of the profit that a great labor should bring me." He grasped Ethan by the right wrist and placed the ring upon his finger. As he did so the men at the far table quietly arose and drew nearer, seating themselves at another table. Their watchful eyes never lost a movement of Fochard's or Ethan's; their heads were bent in an effort to hear what was being said.

"So," said Fochard, in a low tone, "that is done, monsieur, and I am pleased."

"Is this packet," demanded Ethan eagerly, "what I suppose it is?"

"It is," replied Fochard in a somewhat louder tone. "But guard the ring carefully; for it alone will bring you what you desire."

And once more he repeated his instructions to the boy. The three listening men drank in his words eagerly, and when he had finished they paid their score and went out.

"They overheard what you said," spoke Ethan.

"I know it," smiled Fochard. "Since the time when I caught the Lascar in his attempt to leave France with the dispatch, he has been hounding me."

"But," said Ethan, "if you secured it from him why did he go to St. Mary's Isle to see the Earl of Selkirk?"

"To induce that gentleman to purchase the paper. But now that the time has come, I'd rather see liberty result than my own enrichment. If the American government should see its way clear to rewarding me, why, well and good, if not it will not matter much. This resolution has angered the Lascar, for he hoped to share in the English gold."

"I see," said Ethan. "But Danvers did not know of this compact between you."

"Indeed no," smiled Fochard. "I gave him to understand that Siki was safely out of France with the papers and—ahem—that you assisted him."

"So he said," replied the young American.

"And now," said Fochard, arising, "I will be going. You will not fail to bring these matters to the attention of Dr. Franklin at once, I trust. As things are," with a most expressive wave of the hand, "I cannot act for myself. It would be misconstrued—for it is generally supposed that Fochard works only for pay. Good-evening."

He bowed to both Ethan and Longsword, then walked gravely through the lines of small tables and departed. Ethan at once informed Longsword of all that had been said; and the latter shook his head, the grim expression of his face increasing.

"I don't like it," declared the Irishman, decidedly. "And I don't trust the man."

"But it seems possible," protested Ethan. "The French are almost mad with admiration of the Americans just now, and a man may do such a thing in his enthusiasm for a cause."

"But not a man like that, faith! He's as cold blooded as a fish. He has some sort of a plot behind all this, mark my words."

"But what can it be?" asked the lad.

The dragoon shook his head again. "I don't know," he answered. "But time will tell, I think."

They left the coffee house; and as they stepped into the shadows of the Rue Constantine, Ethan noticed his companion pull his scabbard about so that his cutlass would be ready at his hand.

"What's that for?" he asked, in surprise.

"It's always good to have your blade handy on a dark night," said Longsword, briefly.

Ethan made no reply, and so they continued on their way in silence for a time. Finally the lad spoke.

"I suppose it would have been better had we given an alarm and had the Lascar seized by the authorities," said he.

"And have the whole matter of the dispatch come out," cried the Irish soldier. "That would never do. Remember what Dr. Franklin said."

The way to their lodgings was narrow and

dark ; the hour was still fairly early, but there were very few people abroad. As they proceeded along at a smart pace they caught a short, sharp whistle from directly ahead ; and immediately it was repeated from behind. Longsword grasped the lad's arm tightly.

"It sounded very much like a signal of some sort," said Ethan coolly. He cast a long look into the darkness as he spoke ; a shadow seemed to move silently away and melt into the murk ; the soft patter of guarded footsteps fell upon their ears, and then all was still.

"We are being followed," breathed Longsword, his strong hand upon the hilt of his hanger. "And it's all because of that rascal Fochard, I'll be bound."

"Perhaps," said Ethan soberly.

Once more they started on their way ; all was soundless save for the ring of their own footsteps upon the flags ; but suddenly they turned a sharp corner, and caught sight of another skulking shadow flitting before them in the gloom ; and as they paused, the patter of muffled feet fell softly behind them.

"We are in for it," said Ethan Carlyle, as he quietly plucked his cutlass from its scab-

bard. "I wonder how many there are of them."

"Let them come from the front and it makes no differ," said Longsword, blade in hand. "Faith, Master Ethan, it's meself that loves a bit of a fight now and then, but I like a little daylight along wid it by choice."

Ethan drew the dragoon into an open archway, and here they awaited developments. A number of dark figures stole through the shadows and gathered directly opposite.

"There they are, beneath the arch," Ethan heard a voice say in French. "Now then, men, upon them in a body. I must have that ring."

The voice was that of the Lascar; Ethan recognized its thin tones at once. As the man spoke there came the clear bold ring of advancing footsteps upon the frosty ground.

"There is some one coming," said a second voice.

"Make haste!" cried the Lascar, "or we will be too late!"

A quick rush of feet followed this.

"Strike hard!" breathed Longsword through his set teeth. His cutlass swung

through the air with a "swish" and the foremost man fell back with a howl of agony. Ethan's blade hissed downward in a favorite stroke and another of the party was out of the fight with a slash across the shoulder. But the remainder closed in. They were armed with swords, knives and heavy bludgeons; but the deftly played cutlasses of the two master swordsmen seemed to threaten all at once, and though the ruffians struck madly and often, the sharp points were ever in their faces, and the keen edges slashed and bit at them with fury.

A pistol shot rang out sharply. Ethan felt a sudden scorching line run across his forehead; then a gush of blood almost blinded him.

"I'm hit," he said to Longsword, as he strove to dash the blood from his eyes.

This seemed to turn the grim Irelander into a demon. Ethan, dazed by the shot, had sunk upon one knee; the dragoon stood over him playing his weapon with the speed of light and the rage of a Berserker. But even his great skill and matchless endurance would not have served to beat the crowd of ruffians off;

they were closing about him in a circle and about beating him down when a sudden gleam of light shot into the archway, and a stern voice called :

" What, you rascals ! At them, men."

Ethan's dazed eyes caught one glimpse of the evil faces as the rays of a flaring torch lit them up. The circle broke at once and the men turned swiftly ; the next instant they were fighting frantically against a new sword and a brace of heavy clubs in the hands of two stout porters.

With a gasp of delight Ethan saw that the new swordsman was Paul Jones ; then all grew suddenly dark, and he pitched forward and fell upon his face.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE ROAD TO BREST

THE wound in Ethan Carlyle's head was not a very severe one; so next day he was about, looking a trifle pale, and with a bandage about his brow, but almost as well as ever.

When he came down from his room he found Longsword awaiting him.

"How are ye?" asked the dragoon anxiously.

"Just a little hazy in the head," answered Ethan, "but that will pass in a few hours."

"Could ye stand a bit of news if it were broken to ye gently?"

"I think so."

"Well, among those who were wounded in the fight last night was Siki."

"Ah!"

"We have him here. We carried him on the same litter as yourself. He is willing to talk, so the captain says. They are only waiting for you."

"Take me to him."

Longsword promptly led the way into a room off that of Captain Jones'. They found that officer sitting at a table engaged in some correspondence; upon a couch was the lean form of the Lascar; his dark face was drawn with pain and his eyes roved about restlessly. Captain Jones sprang up as Ethan and the dragoon entered.

"I'm delighted," he said, grasping the lad's hand. "You seemed to be resting so easily during the night, though, that I felt sure you would be all right by morning."

"Thank you," said Ethan. Then nodding toward the Lascar he continued, "And so we took a prisoner?"

"Yes," smiled the officer, "and rather an important one, too; he will tell you many things that will surprise you."

Siki raised himself upon one elbow and broke in.

"But, what will be the good if you don't act? You must hurry. The dispatch will be in England in two days if the wind is good."

"What do you mean?" asked Ethan.

"I mean that Fochard is even now preparing to cross the channel to deliver the papers to Danvers."

The man spoke English now; and upon hearing his words Longsword asked quickly:

"Why did ye attack us last night?"

"To get the ring. It was not until I was brought here that I saw what a cunning trick that rascal played upon me. He had the dispatch in his pocket; he feared that we meant to attack him; so he planned this thing of the ring on the moment, and so threw me off the right track. While my men and I were following you, he was, maybe, on the way to Brest."

"Just as I thought, sure!" exclaimed Longsword. "He used us as decoys to draw off the hounds when they were closing in on himself."

"What a ready rascal," cried Ethan, forced to admiration of the man's wit. Then turning to the Lascar he continued:

"You are sure he had the dispatch?"

"I am. He took it from me at Nantes as I was about to leave the country some time ago."

"Did he send you to the Earl of Selkirk?"

"He did. He promised me a share if the earl would buy the papers for the crown."

"Why did he not deal with the English government himself?"

"The war has made him afraid. He wanted a go-between. But when I returned I found that he was playing me false. He is to take ship at Brest and meet Danvers at Plymouth with the dispatch. Fochard is to get the ten thousand pounds, and Danvers is to get all the credit."

"It would seem," said Captain Jones, "that this man has but one object in view—and that is his own profit. He keeps faith with no one."

"No," cried the Lascar, clinching his fist and setting his strong white teeth, "he plays false with all—with you, with Danvers—with me. But I will be revenged! If you start in pursuit at once you will overtake him on the way to Brest or on the sea; and the dispatch will be your own once more."

They talked for some little time, then the three went into another room and consulted.

"I cannot leave Paris at this time," said the captain, "but as the man seems to be speak-

ing the truth, now, you two might act upon his suggestion. A couple of fast horses would take you to Brest in little time, and you may be able to prevent the man's escape."

"But should he reach Brest before us—if he gets to sea—we cannot follow him."

Captain Jones drew out a wallet and took from it a number of French bills of exchange.

"This," said he, "will secure a vessel. If it is not sufficient say that I will make up the balance."

Ethan hesitated, but at length took the bills, and shook the officer by the hand.

"This is generous of you; and you may depend upon me to do my best," he said.

Within an hour himself and Longsword were in the saddle and riding along the road toward Brest.

"Like as not he took a carriage," said the dragoon: "these well-fed gentlemen like Monsieur Fochard don't care much about riding."

"Perhaps the story told us by the Lascar is not true," suggested Ethan, who still felt most doubtful upon this point.

"Maybe not. But it won't be long before

we satisfy ourselves upon that point. We'll not ride many miles before we know who is ahead of us; innkeepers have good memories if they are paid for it."

In this Longsword was right. They paused for food at a small hostelry about noon, and Ethan questioned the landlord.

"A traveler? Oh, yes, monsieur, there have been many pass by to-day and yesterday. You are trying to overtake a friend, I suppose? It will be difficult, because all who went by seemed in a very great hurry, and scarce had time to spend a sou even. But what sort of a man is he whom you ride after? Stout? Ah! And with a great white frill and many seals? I have him. He passed early this morning in a carriage with postilions; and he drove very fast after he had had his breakfast."

This news made them increase the pace of their nags along the road.

"He will probably get fresh horses at given points along the road," said Ethan, "so he will have that advantage of us."

Their mounts were big-boned, lean beasts with plenty of bottom and great willingness;

the miles flowed by under their hoofs; but still no indication of their overtaking the carriage of the secret agent. It was late in the afternoon when they entered a long stretch of road bordered by thick woods upon each side; the trees were tall and bare of leaves; their frost-dry branches swung and rattled in the wind. They had met no person or come upon no human habitation for a long time; and now were astonished to hear a hearty, rollicking sort of a voice roaring out:

"'Oh, the French are on the sea,' says the Shan Van Vogh;
'The French are on the sea,' says the Shan Van Vogh;
'Oh, the French are in the bay, they'll be here without delay,
And the Orange will decay,' says the Shan Van Vogh."

"Hurro," cried Longsword in delight. "Faith, that's a countryman of my own, I'll go bail."

"There can be little doubt of that," said Ethan smiling. "And a hearty, joyful blade he must be, judging from his voice."

Rounding a bend in the road they overtook a strongly built young man with a great shock of yellow hair and the bluest of blue eyes; he bestrode a tall gray horse; and with his head thrown back he trolled forth his song.

"The top of the morning to you," saluted Longsword.

The song was checked so suddenly that it seemed as though the yellow haired young man had bitten it off short. He gazed at the dragoon in astonishment.

"What's that?" demanded he.

"The top of the morning to ye," repeated Longsword, with a smile.

With a whoop of delight the stranger wheeled his gray horse alongside the other and seized his hand in a powerful grip.

"An Irishman, be the hooky!" shouted he. "Faith, then, I'm as glad to see ye as I would be to see me own mother, and I haven't laid eyes on her these many years."

Longsword seemed equally pleased, and his hand grip was fully as warm as that of the other.

"It was like a dream to hear the old Shan Van Vogh upon a lonely French road, so far

away from home," he said. "And faith it warmed the heart of me, so it did."

They exchanged some remarks in the Erse tongue; then Longsword turned to Ethan.

"This," said he formally, "is Rory McHale, captain of the lugger, Erin, now lying at Brest." Then, speaking to McHale, he went on: "And this is Mr. Ethan Carlyle, in the service of the Confederated Colonies of America."

The two thus introduced shook hands, and McHale said:

"Faith, sir, the tide have turned at last; ye'll bate the English, so ye will; for ye have the French with ye now, and that is all ye needed."

"I trust that you are right," said the lad. "England will now be forced to divide her attention between the Colonies and France; and so our chances will be increased."

"Are ye riding to Brest, may I ask?" inquired the Irishman.

"We are," answered Ethan.

"So am I; and if it's not pushing meself for'ard too much I'll be glad to ride in your company, sir."

"You are very welcome, Captain McHale. You are going to join your vessel, I suppose."

"I am. She is all ready for another cruise, and I've been to Paris to see her owners and get instructions."

"You are in the merchant service, then?"

"Not a bit of it. The Erin is a privateer, faith, and as smart a little vessel as ever cut the water."

"Ah, indeed."

"She's French built and Irish manned," continued Captain McHale. "And though I do say it meself, she's done more damage to the Saxon than any other craft of her tonnage that ever slipped out to sea by the light of the stars."

Longsword had been examining the young sailor carefully while he talked to Ethan. Now he asked:

"Are ye of the west of Ireland, Captain McHale?"

"I am, sure," answered the other.

"I thought so. When ye see an Irishman wid straw colored hair and blue eyes he's always a sailor. There's some of the blood of the old Vikings in ye all. King Brian beat

the Danes at Clontarf, but he didn't drive them all out of the land. And if ye went back far enough, McHale, I'll go bail ye'd find your ancestors wid winged helmets on the heads of them and beards a foot long."

The yellow haired man laughed.

"Maybe so," said he. "I'll not be denying it."

After they had ridden together for some minutes, Ethan asked:

"Have you seen anything of a carriage on the road, Captain McHale?"

"I have. One passed me some hours ago. A fat Frenchman in it demanded the road of me and flew into a rage because I would not leap me horse into a ditch to accommodate him. He seemed to be in a great hurry, so he did."

"Our man," said Ethan to Longsword.

"No doubt of it," answered the dragoon.

The seaman looked from one to the other questioningly.

"Ye are wanting this gentleman, then?" asked he.

"We are," said Longsword. "And we're wanting him more than we ever wanted anything in our lives before."

"You may come up wid him."

"It's not likely, if he is hours ahead of us."

"One of his horses had a limp; I think it had cast a shoe. This was the real cause of the Frenchman's anger, I think." The speaker looked from one to the other once more. "Does he know that ye are after him, may I ask?"

"He may suspect. But he is not sure."

"Well, he's running no risks, faith, and is making the best of his time on the road."

Night came on and they put up at a quiet little place upon the edge of the forest through which they had been passing.

"Yes," replied the landlord to Ethan's question, "a stout gentleman passed in a carriage some time ago. He was very angry because I had no horse to give him. One of his was lame, I think, and when he drove off, he went at a very slow pace."

"We'll overtake him in the morning," said Longsword in English. "If his horse was as badly lamed as all that he'll be forced to put up before he reaches the next town where he can get relays."

"We will be on the road by daylight," said

the young American. "If our horses could stand it I'd be in favor of pressing on to-night."

Next morning while the pale moon was still lighting up the snowy countryside they were stirring; a quick breakfast and then they climbed into their saddles and were off.

"I'm not so comfortable upon the quarter-deck of a horse as I am upon the Erin," said Captain McHale as they rode along.

"And it's a long distance to Brest, so it is," said Longsword.

The moon grew paler and the few stars disappeared before the touch of dawn; some distance along the road they caught a gleam of a fire.

"Some wayfarers who had not the money for a bed," said Ethan. "It must have been a cold night, indeed, in the open air."

It was a matter of five or more miles from the inn; the fire seemed to burn close by the roadside, and in the red glare a number of people could be seen sitting beside it. Suddenly Ethan pulled up, and uttered a smothered cry of surprise.

"Look," said he. "There upon the other side of the road."

They followed the direction of his outstretched finger, and saw a carriage drawn up, with horses tied up by the bridles behind it.

"Fochard!" exclaimed Longsword exultantly.

"It can be no one else," said Ethan.

"It's the carriage that I spoke to ye of, I feel sure," said Captain McHale. "The lame horse must have broken down entirely at this point."

Ethan put his horse into a run and the others followed his example. When they reached the fire they halted; and with his hand upon the butt of a pistol, Ethan cried out:

"Stand forth, Monsieur Fochard. We have a small matter of business with you."

One of the men arose to his feet and touched his hat, tremblingly.

"We are postilions, sir, waiting for daylight. The brown horse, there, cast a shoe and went lame. Monsieur Fochard took one of the other horses and rode on to the next town in the night, as he could not wait for us."

"How far is it to the next town?" asked Ethan.

"About eight miles, monsieur."

Ethan wheeled his horse into the middle of the road once more.

"Come on," he called. "He may be delayed in getting a carriage. We have a chance of overtaking him yet."

And away they dashed, with loose reins, down the frosty road.

CHAPTER XIX

HOW THE ERIN PUT TO SEA

HOWEVER, they did not overtake him. Fochard had secured a fresh equipage at the next town, and at once resumed his journey. "He must be at least five hours ahead of us," said Ethan, as they stood at the heads of their panting horses after receiving this news.

"Yes," agreed Longsword. "But Brest is still a long way off, and many accidents may happen on the road."

They mounted once more and set off. All day they heard reports from hostlers and country people of the progress of the secret agent toward the seaport. But they had not, apparently, gained upon him in the least when night overtook them. Next morning they secured fresh horses, as their own were stiff with the hard work of the two preceding days; and then the chase was resumed. However, Fochard traveled like the light; the housetops of Brest were in sight and still they had not sighted him.

"There is small chance of getting any information of his movements after we get into the town," said Ethan, disheartened.

"Don't lose hope," said Longsword. "It's the unexpected that happens, Master Ethan."

"You are right, sure," said Captain McHale. "Many's the time things looked black enough wid me; and then like a flash they've changed when I least expected it."

And so it proved in this case. They had scarcely entered Brest when a voice cried out from a shop door,

"Ah, monsieur rides hard to-day."

The Irish sailor turned toward the shop, and his face took on a broad grin as he caught sight of the fat French chandler who had spoken.

"Monsieur Dubois, good-day," he cried. "Yes, we ride hard because our business is urgent."

The chandler elevated his plump hands.

"Oh, this war!" he exclaimed, "it makes all hurry. Did not a carriage almost run down my eldest son an hour ago, because its passenger was in a very great hurry to see La Tour."

McHale pulled in his horse, sharply, as did Ethan.

"La Tour—a carriage!" he ejaculated. "Did you notice the man, particularly?"

"Indeed I did, monsieur, and made him give me two louis for the fright he gave me."

"A stout man," suggested Ethan, "from Paris, by his look, with many seals on his watch-guard?"

"The same, monsieur," answered the stout chandler, wonderingly.

"Come on," said McHale, eagerly. "To La Tour's; it's not far from here."

Ethan and Longsword, who had also paused, put spurs to their horses after the sailor.

"Who is La Tour?" asked the young American.

"He is a shipping agent," answered McHale. "And the owner of some small vessels, too. If a man wanted a ship to embark on any questionable or desperate enterprise it is to this same La Tour he'd go, faith."

The office of Jean La Tour was near the water front, and was a dusty, cobwebbed, low-ceilinged place, indeed. La Tour was seated

at a broad, flat, green-covered table, carefully docketing some items of his traffic in a book, when the three pulled up, threw themselves from their horses and came stamping in upon him. Upon hearing their business, he shrugged his shoulders and spread his hands wide.

"I am afraid that it is too late," said he. "The gentleman engaged the Montespan some days ago, by agent; he paid me the balance of the charter money a short time ago—less than an hour, perhaps—and is now on his way out of the harbor for all I know."

Longsword, when Ethan translated the shipping-agent's words, uttered a cry of anger.

"The fox is gone," said he; "and he's gone for good unless we can follow him to sea."

"And that is the very thing that we will do," cried Ethan, his face flushed with determination. He turned to La Tour and said, "We want a vessel, the swiftest at your command, and we want it at once. Name your price."

Once more the agent shrugged his shoulders and spread out his hands.

"Impossible," he said. "I have not a vessel in port at this time that would be of any sort of service to you." Then he added with a cheerful air of resignation,

"It is most unfortunate, for I can see that you are very anxious to overtake this gentleman. But I hardly think you can do so, for there is no other ship owner in Brest who would risk his vessels putting to sea at this time. The English are as thick as herrings in the channel."

"No ship!" said Ethan, blankly.

"No, not one," answered La Tour.

"You are mistaken there," spoke Captain McHale; "there is a small bit of a lugger wid eight four pounders in her and as much speed as can be found anywhere." He turned to Ethan and continued, eagerly, "If ye want the Erin, Mister Carlyle, she's at your service, and welcome."

Ethan wrung the speaker's hand.

"Thank you," said he. "This is very good of you, indeed."

"Don't speak of it," answered McHale. "But to horse and let's be off to where the lugger is tied up."

As they climbed into their saddles Longsword asked,

"How soon can you be ready to put to sea?"

"The minute I put me foot upon the deck, my lads will be ready to cast off. The secret of the lugger's success is in her always being ready."

A sharp quick gallop of a quarter of an hour brought them to the wharf where the Erin was moored. She was a trim looking three-master and the length of the yards showed that her spread of canvas would be immense for her tonnage. Ethan hurriedly made arrangements for the return of the horses to their owner, and then followed the two Irishmen on board the Erin.

The lugger's crew were stout, hardy looking young men, with the air of having braved danger many times and not fearing to look it in the face. True to Captain McHale's word, they had cast off the lines, towed the vessel into the stream and had the sails drawing within a very short time after he came aboard.

"You are right," said Ethan as he noted the little vessel's progress with satisfaction. "The Erin has speed."

"She sails like a hawk, sir, before the wind," said her captain proudly.

There were still some hours of daylight and every vessel they passed was carefully studied by McHale.

"I know the Montespan very well," said he. "There is a rake to her tall masts that I could recognize anywhere above the horizon."

But night came on and still there was no sign of the desired vessel. The lugger squared away for Plymouth, and morning found her cutting the choppy seas of the channel, well upon her way. While the captain and his two passengers were at breakfast the lookout shouted:

"Sail ho!"

Instantly Captain McHale was upon deck, glass in hand.

"Where away?" he asked.

"Right ahead, sir."

The skipper of the privateer took a long, thirsty look, and then cried, delightedly,

"It's the Montespan, by the gods of war!"

Ethan and Longsword each took a look at the chase through the glass. Then the former said,

"How many hours is Plymouth off, with this breeze?"

"We should reach there by night if we were going there," answered the skipper.

"Do you think it is possible for the lugger to overtake the vessel ahead in that time?"

"The Erin, sir, can outsail the Montespan in any slant of the wind. We'll overhaul her within five hours, if nothing happens, and you can talk to Monsieur Fochard about any matter of business you might have wid him, below in my cabin."

The steadiness with which the lugger hung upon the track of the Montespan attracted the attention of those on board that vessel before long. A topsail was run up, and a jib set, which increased her speed greatly. Captain McHale smiled, and his blue eyes twinkled.

"See to that, now, how bashful they are. Sure, sorra the bit do they want to become acquainted wid us."

The great, square canvases of the lugger were trimmed and hauled taut; she heeled a little more, and the white spume that boiled in her wake showed an increase in her speed

also. Mile after mile was covered; the Montespan constantly lifted higher and higher, until at length they could plainly see, with the naked eye, the people upon her decks. However, the lugger was not making the speed that her skipper expected of her, and he seemed vexed when the chase spread more canvas and began to slowly slip away.

The lug sails were drenched with water to make them draw better; this improved matters, but not much, and the sun was low in the west, the gray coast of England lay ahead, and still the Montespan was beyond the reach of the Erin.

Longsword, as he realized that night was about to close in and rob them of their prey, looked hungrily over the lugger's tarpaulin-covered guns.

"A shot from one of those," he said, "might bring her to."

"She is a French craft," said Captain McHale, "and I dare not try it."

"Could ye not explain away the small matter of a broken spar?" suggested the crafty Longsword. "As you see, she flies no flag; ye might be mistaken about her being a

French vessel, after all. She may be English, and as a French privateer it is your duty to your owners to examine her near at hand."

The skipper ran his fingers through his yellow hair and grinned.

"Troth, then," remarked he, "there is a good deal in what ye say, Mister O'Moore; and now that ye put it afore me I have a great mind to see what effect a ball would have on her. The Erin would catch her in the long run; but night is coming, and the English coast is too near at hand."

He gave orders to his mate, who at once stripped one of the forward guns. The powder and shot had just been brought upon deck when Ethan suddenly cried to McHale:

"See, there! What vessel is that?"

Upon the lee, a large ship was bearing down upon the Montespan and the pursuing lugger. All eyes upon the Erin had been centred upon the chase and had given no attention to anything else; consequently, the appearance of the ship was something like magic to the lugger's crew.

"She flies the British flag," cried Long-

sword. "There's ructions coming too, for she is stripping her decks for a fight."

A sudden rending roar came from the British ship's bow, a red tongue of flame darted from a port and a haze of smoke curled upward. In answer the Montespan ran up the English flag; but Captain McHale cried bravely:

"No sailing under false colors for the Erin. We sink or swim with our own colors at the peak."

The French flag went up to the lugger's mainmast a moment later, and with a swing of the wheel McHale headed her toward the coast.

"We'll get shallow water further in," said he, "and some ugly looking rocks. A vessel of her draft will not venture in after us."

But the frigate seemed to give her attention to the Montespan; the ensign did not appear to deceive her, for another shot rang out, and the French vessel's fore topmast was carried away. Then another and another shot followed in quick succession; and the Montespan signaled her surrender, with her rudder shot away and a hole knocked in her hull just above the water line.

"Good firing," said Ethan, admiringly. Then he continued with a change of tone, "And again the dispatch is lost to me."

He was standing by the after rail and watching the beautiful handling of the frigate's guns; as he spoke he saw a boat pull away from her to the Montespan; and then she turned her attention to the lugger.

"Are we out of range?" asked the young American of the skipper.

"We'll know in a moment," answered McHale, grimly.

And so they did; as the frigate swept around she let go her forward battery at the Erin and the shot shrilled above her in the dusk. But McHale held the little vessel upon her way; night was all but upon them, and he hoped that shoal water and darkness would assist him to elude the enemy. The gunnery of the latter was not now so good; she fired many times and did little or no damage; night had spread her bat-like wings above the waters when a last shot splintered the mizzen mast, and it fell in a tangle of rigging over the stern.

"Take care," roared Longsword to Ethan, who stood directly in its way.

But the warning came too late; with a wild cry the lad was swept over the side into the sea; the lugger went rushing by, having changed her course to down coast; the lanterns of the frigate could be seen gleaming for a time further out to sea. But at last these, too, disappeared and Ethan Carlyle was left to utter darkness, struggling with the waves.

CHAPTER XX

SHOWS HOW A SOLDIER CAME OUT OF MILL PRISON

It was fortunate for Ethan that he was a powerful swimmer, and at no great distance from the shore. He took the matter very coolly until he got his bearings; then he struck out for the beach. The pull of the undertow made landing rather difficult, but after a long struggle he finally accomplished it. He had no fear of detection, and boldly presented himself at a fisherman's cabin and asked permission to dry his clothes.

The fisherman and his wife gladly took him in; and they insisted upon providing him with supper and a bed.

"I know what it is to fall into the sea in the night," said the man with a shake of his head. "And I'll not refuse an English lad like yourself any help I can give."

Ethan, of course, did not undeceive him; to have told that he was an American would

have meant imprisonment; so he merely thanked the good people, and accepted their many little kindnesses without revealing his nationality.

Next morning he discovered that he was but a half dozen miles from Plymouth; so, after insisting that the fisher folks take an English gold piece which he happened to have, he set out for the town. And as he tramped along the road his thoughts were upon the probable fate of the dispatch and of the lugger.

"Both in the hands of the British," he murmured dispiritedly. "There can be nothing else for it. And who knows, before another sun sets I may be suspected and taken myself."

He had no definite idea as to what he should do when he reached Plymouth; but something might be learned of the Erin, and that more than anything else induced him to enter the town. After wandering about for some time and watching the shipping and other things, his lagging steps halted before a great stone structure, grim looking and solid like a fortress.

"A prison," he muttered as soon as his eyes traveled over it. "Mill prison, where they treat the American seamen so cruelly, I have no doubt. And perhaps Shamus and that brave fellow McHale will be behind those walls before long."

As he looked, the huge door of the place opened and a tall, erect young man, in the scarlet coat of an English soldier, emerged, paused a moment, his eyes on Ethan, then came directly across toward him. For a moment the lad's impulse was to run; but second thought showed him how useless this would be, and he stood his ground.

"You are a sailor, I see," said the soldier, his eyes running over the dress that Ethan had worn since his first day in the Ranger. The speaker was a handsome young fellow, with clear honest eyes, and a resolute face; in spite of himself Ethan liked his looks.

"I am," he answered, promptly.

"Out of a man of war, I take it?"

"Yes, and looking for another of the same sort," said Ethan.

The other regarded him with a peculiar expression, then asked:

"What part of England are you from?"

Ethan laughed lightly, and put the question aside.

"I'll not answer that for certain reasons," said he.

"No harm done, I hope, comrade," spoke the young soldier.

"None at all," said Ethan, easily.

The other turned and was about to walk away down the street; but he paused and said slowly and distinctly:

"London, I think, is the place for you."

Then he wheeled about on his heel and walked, with military erectness, down along the prison wall, which he turned and so disappeared from view.

"What could he have meant by that?" thought Ethan, astonished. "'London, I think, is the place for you.'" He remained silent a moment, and then resumed, "And I think he is right. London is the place for me. There I can lose myself in the throngs; and perhaps I can somehow get a ship for France."

He gave up all hope of Longsword and McHale; bitter as was the thought he made up his mind that it would be useless to linger

about Plymouth in the hope of helping them; he began to think, also, that it was dangerous for him, in his sailor's dress, to be seen upon the streets; at any time a press-gang might happen along, for the king's ships were badly in need of men for the American war. So before the city was well astir he had laid it behind him. On the road he met many wagons in from the farms with loads of fresh butter and eggs and other things for the town.

"Oh, lad," cried one old man pointing at the young tar with his whip, and speaking in a broad dialect, "hast left thy ship? It's main queer, so it is, that first I should meet with a soldier, and now with a sailor, upon the road to town."

"A soldier," thought Ethan, as he trudged along. "I wonder if it could be the same one?"

Many times during the day he inquired his way of simple country folk along the way. They stared when they heard that he was going up to London; it was a very large place and very far away. That night he stopped at a small wayside inn; he saw the young soldier whom he had noticed coming out of the prison

at Plymouth, and who had spoken to him. But the youth studiously avoided him, and as Ethan was not at all anxious to form the acquaintance of king's men, he did not force himself upon him.

When he arose next morning the soldier was not to be seen. The boy breakfasted at his leisure; the landlord and his wife, who took the young American to be a seaman of a British ship, off, perhaps, upon a visit to his old home in some inland town, began to question him about the progress of the war.

"And have you seen any of these American privateers that we hear so much about?" asked the landlord. Ethan nodded, and the man went on, "Ah, they must be very desperate fellows, indeed; and stubborn fighters, too, I have heard tell."

"They are," said Ethan.

"Englishmen will have to stand together to gain the victory over such enemies," said the landlord, shaking his head. "And Englishmen in the service should trust one another; they shouldn't be like the soldier who slept here over night. Do you know, he seemed afraid of you; and slipped away before you

got up, without waiting for his breakfast. He said he'd take some bread and cheese to eat upon the road."

When Ethan once more resumed his journey toward London, his mind was full of conjectures regarding this queer person in uniform. Several times during the day he felt confident that he caught a glimpse of the scarlet coat dodging behind hedges and haystacks. The lad became suspicious of this and left the highroad for a small and badly cut up wagon way which a farmer informed him would land him on the London road some ten miles farther on.

"I'll be out of sight of him now," said the young seaman, as he plodded along. "It can't be that he suspects me for what I am; if that were so he'd have summoned help and taken me long ago. But I don't like his actions for all that, and it's best that I see no more of him."

But his ruse to avoid any further meeting with the redcoat was not a success. Night brought him to another roadside hostelry, and the first person whom he saw, sitting upon a bench before the door, was that identical per-

son. As they stood staring at each other in wondering surprise, Ethan noticed a sudden spasm of laughter sweep across the young man's face; the thing seemed infectious for, unable to control himself, the young American threw back his head and burst into a peal that made the old inn ring and caused the white-capped landlady to come rushing out to see what was the matter.

The soldier regarded Ethan with somewhat puzzled eyes; it seemed that there was something about the boy that he did not quite understand, nor altogether trust.

"I see that you have followed my advice," said he.

"Yes," replied Ethan. "I am going to London."

"You have chosen a rather out-of-the-way route," said the soldier.

"Perhaps," answered the other, "but the highroad is not always desirable."

The young man regarded Ethan intently; then he said:

"Somehow, I can't quite make up my mind about you."

Ethan thought of the odd conduct of the speaker and replied,

"The feeling is mutual, then; for you have puzzled me some."

The landlady had gone in once more, seeing that there was nothing wrong, and Ethan had taken a seat upon a bench facing the man in the scarlet coat. There was a short silence between them, then the latter asked:

"Will you lend me your knife; I want to trim my cane a bit."

He held a light cane in his hand; through constant contact with the ground this had become worn and splintered at one end. Ethan noticed that the man carried a knife in his own belt, but thinking it in bad condition, he handed over his own without a word. The soldier began to chip at his cane with great deliberation.

"It's a good blade," said he. "Where did you get it?"

"Aboard ship," said Ethan.

"Ah," the man darted a quick look at him and then went on chipping. "You got it from some other sailor, I suppose."

"No," answered the lad, all unsuspecting, "the knife was supplied all hands by ——"

He stopped suddenly and bit his lip. The soldier looked at him, a laugh in his frank eyes.

"You were going to say—Congress," spoke he, with great calmness. Ethan stared at him in astonished silence, and then the man continued, "I recall the knife well; I had one myself. It was given me while on board the Lexington."

"The Lexington," said Ethan, his breath coming hard. "Were you on board her?" He continued to stare; then added, "As a prisoner, I suppose."

"Prisoners are not supplied with knives on board American vessels of war," said the other. "I was master's mate in the Lexington."

"Then," breathed Ethan excitedly, "you are an American."

"I am," laughed the other. "I am of Norfolk, in Virginia, and my name is Richard Dale."

"But," and Ethan's eyes ran over the British uniform, "you are now ——"

He hesitated; and the other leaned over

and tapped him upon the knee with one finger.

"I am still an American. I wear a British uniform, but it is a disguise."

Then looking all about so as to assure himself that he was not overheard, Richard Dale told Ethan Carlyle his story. He told how the Lexington on that September day, when short of powder and ball, encountered the British cutter Alert. A desperate cannonading of two hours' duration ensued; then the Lexington, running out of ball, clapped on sail and stood away. But the Alert was the swifter craft and overhauled her, renewing the engagement. The Lexington's crew broke up all the iron on board and rammed it into her guns, but when this was exhausted she was forced to strike her colors.

The officers and crew were landed at Plymouth and confined in Mill prison, where they suffered greatly.

"The men were actually starved," said Richard Dale, his eyes shining with anger. "You will better understand their dreadful condition when I tell you that one day they caught a stray dog and killed and cooked it

for food. But Captain Johnson and some of the officers dug a hole beneath the wall of the prison, and one night about a dozen of us escaped. We held together for a week or more, wandering by night about the countryside; then we separated and I made my way to London with one companion. We had taken a ship for France when a press-gang boarded her and we were seized, recognized and sent back to Mill prison in chains. I have been there ever since," said the young man in conclusion. "My first breath of freedom in a year was taken when I stepped through the door of the prison yesterday morning and saw you standing across the way."

"I don't exactly understand," said Ethan bewilderedly. "No one attempted to stop you."

"Of course not," answered Dale with a smile. "A kind hearted person of rank who pitied me provided me with this uniform; and I passed, unsuspected, through the keepers to freedom."

"Who was the person?" asked Ethan. But Richard Dale smiled and shook his head. He lived a long life and died at the head of

the American navy, but he ever refused to tell who had assisted him that day to escape from the Mill prison at Plymouth.

"When I saw you standing across the way," said Dale, "your intent expression unnerved me for a moment. I thought you had penetrated my disguise. But when I heard your voice I fancied that you might be an American."

"And that is why you warned me to go to London," said Ethan.

"Yes. But when I saw you at the inn last night I began to suspect you again. I fancied you were following me on the road to-day, and changed my route and came this way."

"And I," laughed Ethan, "thought the same of you, and left the highroad for the same reason."

They talked together while the landlady prepared some bacon and eggs for them. A light carriage drawn by a pair of swift gray horses drew up at the inn door; a man and a well grown boy leaped out; and at sight of them Ethan Carlyle shrank back out of sight.

"What is it?" asked Dale in astonishment as the newcomers entered the inn.

But Ethan did not reply; his eyes were following the forms of Stephen Wheelock and the spy, Danvers, as they disappeared through the doorway.

CHAPTER XXI

THE EXPLOIT OF MASTER DIRK HATFIELD

ETHAN recovered himself in a very few moments; and then he told Dale the story of the dispatch and the part which Danvers had played in its disappearance.

"And so it has fallen into British hands at last," said Dale, regretfully. "Too bad; for you and Captain Jones did all you could to save it, I can see that."

Just then the landlady came out and announced that their supper was ready. In a few moments they were seated with the smoking bacon and eggs before them, also some golden butter and a white loaf. There was a broad window looking out upon a sort of porch at the side of the inn, and just outside this window Danvers and young Wheelock sat engaged in an earnest conversation.

"The bacon is good," said Dale with great satisfaction, "and the eggs are perfect. It's a dish for a king after the food of the prison."

Hoof-beats sounded upon the road. Look-

ing through the window they saw a man, mounted upon a powerful black horse, draw up and dismount. He wore long boots, a full skirted coat and a cocked hat with a star of silver metal at one side. In his belt were a pair of long heavy pistols; and as he gave his horse to a groom he lilted a rollicking air. The landlady, who had just brought in a fresh dish of eggs, at sight of him dropped it upon the floor, at the same time uttering an exclamation of alarm.

"Again," she cried, in apparent terror, "he'll have the magistrates upon me next, the villain!"

"What is it, good woman?" asked Dale, curiously.

"That I can't tell, sir," replied the hostess. "It would be as much as my life would be worth, perhaps."

"Don't take the saddle off," directed the newcomer in a deep voice, "and stand ready to bring him out immediately when I give the word." He tossed the groom a crown piece, then raised his voice to a shout. "Ho, the house," he cried. "Mistress Parsons, why do you not come out to welcome an old patron?"

"A patron whom I wish I'd never laid eyes upon," said the landlady. But, nevertheless, she bustled out at once, and they could hear her greeting the man in the cocked hat with well assumed effusiveness. There was a slow-moving, chuckle-headed fellow employed at the inn in some capacity, who happened to be in the room at the time. He shook his head from side to side, and grinned widely.

"Mistress Parsons don't like Dirk Hatfield to come here," he volunteered, to Ethan and Dale. "But she daren't order him away."

"Why not?" asked Ethan for want of something better to say. The man opened his round eyes still wider and exclaimed in tones of wonder,

"What, drive off Dirk Hatfield! Why he'd kill us all in our beds. Don't you know him, sirs? He's a highwayman," in a low voice of terror; "they say that once he stopped the Lord Mayor of London himself and made him deliver. Oh, he's a daring rogue, indeed."

Before they had time to comment upon this the landlady ushered Master Hatfield into the room. He was a large man with wide

shoulders and deep chest, and he walked with the swagger of a bravo. At sight of Dale's scarlet coat he started; but he recovered himself immediately, hitched one of his heavy pistols nearer to his hand, and took a seat at a table near the window.

"Now, Mistress Parsons," said he, "I'll have some food; and make all the speed you can, for I must hurry on."

"Very well, sir," said the landlady with a bow, "I'll attend to it myself, sir."

She bustled out of the room to the kitchen, and the highwayman spread his booted legs under the table, tucked his thumbs into his belt and regarded Ethan and Dale with careless indifference. But his attention was soon drawn from them to Danvers and Wheelock who still sat conversing upon the side porch near the window. Their tones had grown louder, and Ethan could plainly hear what passed between them, as could Dale and Master Dirk Hatfield.

"And how did you learn that Fochard had deceived you?" Wheelock was saying.

"He sent me word himself that he had the paper—that he had taken it from Siki. He

had intended disposing of it himself, but at the last moment he grew afraid; the French might call it treason, you know, to give comfort to the enemy in the way of news. So he crossed the channel in a French vessel ——"

"Why," exclaimed Wheelock, "it was the British frigate Sea Horse he was in at Plymouth, was it not?"

"It was. The Sea Horse took the vessel in which he had crossed: but when the captain learned that Fochard had secret business with me he knew that for the time at least he was an important personage and so entered the river and sent for me."

He drew out a packet, stained and soiled, and sealed with great splotches of red wax, and laid it upon the table between them with much satisfaction. Ethan drew in his breath sharply at sight of it and his hand closed like a vise upon Dale's arm.

"The secret dispatch," he whispered.

The boy was in such a position that Danvers, even should he look into the room, could not see him; but Ethan had a clear view of the two upon the porch, and kept his eyes upon them constantly.

"Ten thousand pounds," said Wheelock in a brooding sort of way. "It's a great deal of money to give up to that French rascal."

"I know it," said Danvers, "but those were his terms. He wanted all the money and kindly offered the credit to me. And that was something; for he could have just as well as not have taken the papers to Lord North and received both."

"The ten thousand pounds will be delivered to whoever turns over the paper, and no questions asked, I suppose," said Wheelock.

"Yes," laughed Danvers, once more stuffing the packet into the breast pocket of his coat, "but don't think to make off with it, my lad; I have it safely here, and mean to keep it."

All this seemed to interest Master Hatfield vastly. He leaned intently forward, and the expression upon his face was eager and alert. Dale nudged Ethan and the latter nodded that he saw this sudden display of attention.

"It will not now be long before the dispatch is in the hands of the ministry at London," continued Danvers, "if these horses hold out."

He paused suddenly, for he had caught

sight of the intent face of the highwayman and the covetous snap of his eyes. His voice, when he resumed, had fallen much lower; and in a few moments the two left the porch and entered a private room of the inn.

While he ate his supper of capon pie and smacked his lips over his stone mug the gentleman of the road smiled grimly. Ethan and Dale shortly withdrew, and once clear of the room they looked at each other significantly.

"The paper," said Dale, "will soon be sought by good Master Hatfield, if I am not much mistaken."

Just then the chuckle-headed attendant at the inn came out and called to a hostler who stood at the stable door.

"What's wanted?" asked the latter.

"You're to bring up the carriage for the two gentlemen immediately," said the other.

His mistress, her eyes full of anger, appeared behind him at this and whirled him within as she hissed,

"You thick-head! Were you not told to give the order quietly?"

"They have taken the alarm," commented Dale, referring to Danvers and Wheelock.

"The knight of the road did not impress them."

"They will not wait for refreshments, even," said Ethan. "And night is falling, too. They would be safer if they remained."

Night had come upon the still countryside while they stood talking before the inn; and the darkness was growing deeper and deeper with each passing moment. When the stablemen brought the carriage around to the front its lamps were lit and glimmered redly.

"These two travelers must be in a hurry," said one of the men to the other.

"Indeed, yes," answered the second. "It's going to be a dark night, and they'll have trouble before they reach the highroad to London. This one is badly cut up a piece below here."

"But the road won't be their greatest hindrance," whispered the first speaker. "Don't you see that Master Hatfield has ordered out Black George? There is Will Hampton with him now."

The two Americans turned their eyes instantly toward a side door to the stable, from which came the faint glimmer of a lantern.

A third groom was leading the great black horse of Hatfield out into the yard; and in the sickly flare of the light they also made out the tall figure of the highwayman, bending over and looking to the priming of his pistols.

"I must get the dispatch at once," said Ethan hurriedly.

He was about darting into the inn, but Dale caught him by the arm.

"Not so fast," said the Virginian. "Let Danvers know who you are and he'll sell us out without hesitation."

"You are right," said Ethan.

A clatter of hoofs upon the stones caused them to turn once more toward the stable-yard. Master Dirk Hatfield had thrown himself into the saddle, and now with a wave of his hand to the hostler, which looked much like a warning to silence, he disappeared in the gloom. Danvers and Wheelock soon came out and entered their vehicle.

"Well?" said Dale inquiringly.

"I'll follow behind and stop them on the road," said Ethan, resolutely. "Then I can get the paper, if possible, and slip away before

Danvers can reach the ear of any one to betray me."

"I'm with you," said Richard Dale.

Ethan clasped his hand in silence. At that moment the carriage started up the dark road. A boy was driving it, and he was compelled to go slowly, so they had no trouble in keeping it within hearing; for it was impossible to see more than a dozen yards ahead, and the lamps were but pin points of flame invisible from behind.

Suddenly there was a shout, a shrill cry and the sound of plunging horses.

"He's upon them already," shouted Ethan.

Both he and Dale broke into a stumbling run down the dark road toward the sounds. Then came a pistol shot, another cry, the confused sound of voices, and at last rapid hoofbeats flying along the road. When they reached the scene they found the driver crouched in fear by the roadside, one of his horses lying in a tangle of harness, while Danvers, supported by Wheelock, was bleeding and unconscious. Ethan seized one of the carriage lamps, flashed its dim rays about,

and took in all this. But he kept his face hidden as much as possible.

"Help!" called Wheelock, eagerly, as the footsteps of the newcomers fell upon his hearing. "A highwayman has attacked and has robbed us."

"Of your money?" said Ethan, a tremble in his voice.

"No; of a paper—a very valuable paper. Get horses; pursue him; take him dead or alive, and the reward will open your eyes."

Ethan and Dale looked at each other, but neither spoke; from far down the dark road the hoofs of the great black horse rang ever more faintly upon the frozen ground.

CHAPTER XXII

THE PRESS-GANG

To hasten back to the inn and secure a couple of horses was the work of but a few minutes. Then Ethan and Richard Dale started in pursuit of the gentleman of the road.

"He's making his way toward the highway to London," said Ethan as their mounts dashed bravely along the dark road. "And as I suppose he knows every cross-path and turn of the way there is not much hope of our overtaking him."

"I'm afraid not," answered Dale.

"But we'll after him for all that," said Ethan. "We must take advantage of every chance to recover the dispatch."

But it was as the boy feared. Master Dirk Hatfield knew all the roads and cross-paths, even in the darkness, and, like a fox, his first efforts were devoted to winding and doubling upon his trail. But they felt that he was

headed for London, and so pressed on in that direction.

They reached the capital late one afternoon, and sent the horses to a person whom their owner had indicated.

"Now," said Ethan, after this had been attended to, "I think the first thing that we should do is to get a change of costume—something less noticeable than we are now wearing."

"I have been thinking of that," said Dale. "This scarlet coat makes me a marked man, and that is not good for one who does not desire to be observed."

They sought out the district down near the water-side where they knew there would be slop-shops whose proprietors would be only too glad to turn an honest penny and keep silent. They came upon such a place within a few moments after entering the quarter frequented by the seamen who came into that port. There were old clothes in great variety hung about the door upon pegs, and a long-bearded, hook-nosed man prowled up and down, his sharp eyes ever alert for customers.

"Oh," said he, rubbing his hands together as they paused before the place. "How do you

do, Jack? Soldier, I am glad to see you, my son. Just step inside. If it is clothing you want, or jewelry, you have come to the right place. I have a stock, my dears, that can't be matched in London."

"For badness, I suppose you mean," said Ethan, as they followed him in.

The hook-nosed man laughed and jagged the boy playfully with his elbow.

"Jack-tars," said he, "always like their joke. But I enjoy it, my son; for I understand your fun."

He looked at them from under shaggy brows, with eyes that twinkled with cunning.

"It is not jewelry you want?" he said.

"No," answered Ethan.

Again the man laughed.

"I knew it," he said. "It is clothing—clothing such as most citizens of London wear—clothing that will pass you in the crowd along with the thousand and one others and will cause no man to look at you twice."

He leered at them knowingly; and Dale said,

"You are a wise man, friend; so let us see these garments of which you speak."

The man promptly spread many suits of more or less worn clothing before them.

"Youth," spoke he, sagely, as they were selecting, "is ever desiring a change. They are not satisfied with the dull life they lead—and so go into the navy, or army. And," with a chuckle of malice, "they grow tired of that very soon, as a rule; and then they come to me, change their clothes and slip away."

"You think us deserters, then," said Ethan.

"My son, I think nothing. I take your money and give you the goods you buy. I never question my customers. But," with one dirty finger laid alongside his nose, "I sometimes hazard a guess."

They selected the garments which they preferred, and a few moments later they had donned them.

"We'll leave the others," said Ethan, as he paid the bill. "You can do what you like with them."

"You are very kind," smirked the hook-nosed man. "And I thank you much."

He followed them outside and stood watching them as they went down the street.

"A knave, or I never saw one," remarked

Dale with a backward glance over his shoulder.

"I think you are right," said Ethan. "I suppose most of these water-side characters are alike; they'd sell any one if the price were high enough."

They turned a corner, out, as they supposed, of the man's view; a little further on Ethan suddenly grasped Dale's arm.

"Look there," he whispered, his face paling with sudden excitement.

"What is it?" asked the ex-master's mate of the Lexington.

"Under the shed, there by the pastry cook's. The horse, I mean."

Dale gazed at the large, coal black beast hitched to a post and munching a feed of corn out of a small tub.

"Dirk Hatfield's horse," cried the sailor.

"The same," said Ethan. "And where the horse is the master cannot be far away."

"In the cook's shop," said Dale, eagerly.

"As like as not. Let us go in."

They crossed toward the glass fronted shop; through the window they saw a neatly appointed place whose counters were filled with

the flaky products of its ovens; a white-capped, round faced man presided over it; and at a table, knife and fork in hand and napkin tucked under his shirt collar, sat the worthy Master Hatfield, attacking with gusto a smoking dish of pigeon stew. As the two Americans stalked in, he gave them a glance; but their change of dress saved them from recognition. They took seats, and the white capped man served them with food, all the time continuing the conversation which he had been holding with the highwayman.

"Yes," he was saying, "the king's ships are in a bad way indeed for lack of men. They say the frigate Serapis is almost unmanned."

"Too bad," growled the gentleman of the road, who though his hand was constantly raised against the law and its officers was a stout Briton at heart. "How do we expect to beat the French and the Yankees if our ships can't put to sea?"

"You speak truth," said the pastry cook. "And the impudent Yankees need a beating badly. Their insolence in crossing the ocean

in their cockle-shells and attacking English ports is more than can be borne."

The man puffed his round cheeks with indignation and rattled the plates with vigor. Dirk Hatfield paused in his assault upon the pigeon stew long enough to reply:

"Oh, but they'll get their trouncing before long, mark me. English tars and English ships rule the sea; it's not for the Yankees to hoist a flag without British permission, and their colored rags will soon be trailed in the dirt of their decks, and Britannia queen of them all, as is her place."

"Are you up from the water-side, friends?" asked the cook, as Ethan and Dale calmly ate of the dishes he had placed before them, and watched the highwayman cautiously.

"No," answered Ethan; "from Plymouth."

The highwayman lifted his head and gave the boy a long look of interest.

"Are the press-gangs out, there, as in London?" asked the proprietor.

"I've heard that they were busy there," said Ethan.

"It's the same all over the kingdom, I suppose."

Neither of the Americans replied; and in a few moments Hatfield spoke up.

"Plymouth is a brisk little place; it is no great size, indeed, but many things happen there."

"Right," said the pastry cook; "the fleets sail from there very often."

"It's not by sea alone that Plymouth is brisk," continued the gentleman of the road; "but by land as well. And the country between that town and London offers many opportunities to a man of parts."

"Ay. I've heard it said often that it was a most excellent farming section."

"Good strokes of business are to be done thereabouts," continued Hatfield. "My last visit there," and he slapped the breast of his coat with a chuckle, "promises to pay me a pretty penny, indeed."

"The luck was with you, then?" cried the pastry cook with innocent interest.

"It was," laughed Hatfield. "It was very much with me, sir."

"He still has the dispatch," whispered Ethan to Dale.

"In his breast pocket," returned the

sailor, in the same low tone. "But he is armed."

"If we take him suddenly we'll have the advantage for all that."

The pastry cook and the highwayman continued their talk; the two Americans had their heads together, thrashing out the situation.

"It's dark without," said Ethan at last, guardedly. "We'll take him unawares when he is about to mount his horse."

Dale now and then glanced with much interest into the street through the glass of the doors. He leaned forward at length and spoke to the proprietor.

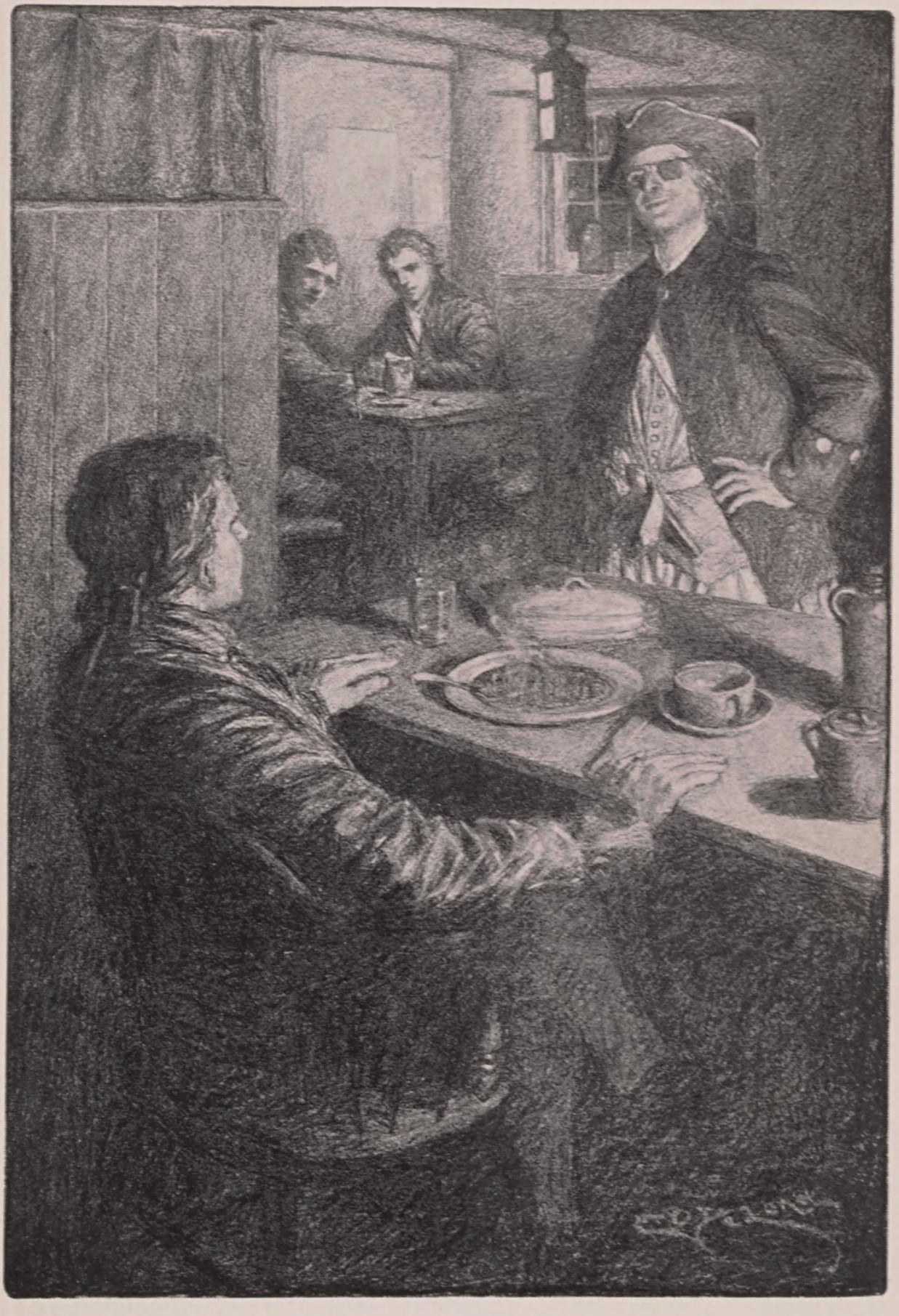
"Your place," said he, "appears to attract much attention, sir."

The man seemed greatly pleased and smiled broadly.

"I have often marked that," he said. "It increases business, sir, to make one's shop bright and attractive."

"You have much custom among the sailors in the district, I suppose?"

The pastry cook pursed up his mouth and shook his head doubtfully.



AN ANGRY LOOK CAME INTO HATFIELD'S EYES

"No," he said, "I think not. The grog shops attract them most."

"I have noticed," said Dale calmly, his gaze once more directed toward the street, "that there are many sailors about just now, and they all, somehow, seem to feel much interest in this place."

A number of seamen with cutlasses belted at their sides were to be seen across the way; two or three stood at the window; and as Dale spoke their leader, evidently a boatswain, opened the door and swaggered in. The proprietor advanced with an uneasy smile.

"Good evening, sir," said he, with a bow.

"How do you do?" returned the other. As he said this he glanced at the shop's three patrons with an air of calm inspection. The powerful figure of Dirk Hatfield seemed to attract him, and he coolly advanced to his side.

"Sailor, I think," he said.

"Wrong," said the gentleman of the road, looking up from his meal.

"I think not," persisted the man-of-war's-man quietly.

An angry look came into Hatfield's fierce

eyes; he laid down his knife and fork, leaned back in his chair and growled out,

"Well, my man, you are a pert lad enough; but be careful how you speak to a gentleman. You are in danger of having your face spoiled if you talk like that."

The sailor laughed. He swung one leg over the corner of the table at which the other sat and tapped with one finger tip upon the butt of a pistol.

"I'm not much afraid of that—my man," he said.

The pastry cook leaned over Ethan and whispered, "There is a door in the rear that leads through the kitchen and into a small court."

The young American looked at the man in surprise; then he felt Dale touch his sleeve, and turned toward him.

"Look outside there," whispered the ex-master's mate.

Ethan did as requested; to his surprise he saw the hook-nosed bearded man, of whom they had bought the clothing a short time before, conversing, with much gesticulation, with the seamen without.

"He's a crimp," said Dale, in a whisper, "and has betrayed us. The place is surrounded by a press-gang."

"A press-gang!" Ethan stared at his companion.

"Yes," said Dale, with set face; "and as I have had one experience with this sort of gentry before, I don't care for another."

"The rear door, gentlemen, the rear door," whispered the pastry cook. "Here they come."

A half-dozen seamen crowded into the shop; the boatswain, who still sat nonchalantly upon the corner of the table, said, briefly:

"You'll find over there the two we are after, lads."

He jerked his thumb toward the Americans as he spoke. The hook-nosed man stood in the doorway and grinned with satisfaction. The highwayman still lay back in his chair; his teeth showed, wolf-like, and his strong hands gripped the edge of the table.

"The paper," whispered Ethan. His face was white as he leaned toward Dale and uttered the words. Once more the longed-for dispatch was almost within his reach, and once more it was about to elude him.

"Don't think of that now," said Dale, guardedly. "It is impossible for us to recover it here. Let us escape first, and help Hatfield to escape if we can. We can gain possession of the dispatch later, if all is well."

The sailors now advanced upon the two.

"Do ye strike your colors, shipmates?" asked an old gunner with a laugh. "The king needs men too badly to have likely young chaps such as you run off like this."

He was about to lay hands upon Dale when Ethan struck him a quick, heavy blow that sent him reeling. Dale was up in an instant, and as the men of the press-gang sprang forward, planted blow after blow among them with telling effect. A rush of additional seamen came through the door; Dirk Hatfield was upon his feet, also, by now; his heavy pistol barked sullenly among the crowd and then rose and fell with battering force as he used it hammer like. Ethan found himself shoulder to shoulder with the man for an instant.

"When the lights go out," he said, "make for the rear door."

Hatfield nodded understandingly, striking out viciously all the while.

A number of candles had been overturned in the struggle; now only a single branch illuminated the room. Ethan, with a quick pass, knocked this over, also, and the shop was instantly plunged into darkness.

"Now," cried the young American.

He and Dale gained the door in the rear; but the highwayman's nasty temper played its part here, and he paused to deal a shower of blows upon the boatswain, whom he had seized by the throat just as the light was extinguished.

Ethan and Dale plunged into the little court at the back of the place and found a single seaman guarding it with drawn cutlass. A quick rush together disposed of him, and in a moment they were upon the street, lurking in the shadows, and hearkening to the fierce conflict that raged within the room which they had just left.

This lasted but a few moments, however; then the press-gang appeared, dragging in the midst of them the grim figure of the highwayman.

"Caught!" breathed Ethan, despairingly.

"Master Hatfield," said Dale in a low voice, "has stopped his last traveler for many a long day, and is now in a fair way toward serving his king upon the sea."

CHAPTER XXIII

HOW THE BON HOMME RICHARD MET THE SERAPIS

Ethan Carlyle and his friend Richard Dale, after their experience with the press-gang, made it a point to keep themselves as much in the background as possible during the remainder of their stay in London. This latter was very much longer than they had expected; days grew into weeks and weeks into months, but still they found no means of crossing the narrow seas to France.

Dale had little or no money, and Ethan's supply had all but given out when, at length, they found a Scotch skipper who agreed to give them passage in his vessel. On the way across the two young men talked much about the future and of what they still hoped to do in the cause of liberty.

"If it is my good fortune to fall in with Captain Paul Jones once more," said Ethan, "I shall bless my lucky stars."

"That is a gallant sailor and an excellent

commander," spoke Richard Dale, admiringly. "I should like to serve under him."

Ethan had told Dale many times of the captain's bravery, skill and splendid love of freedom; his tales had fired the young Virginian's imagination to such an extent that he desired nothing better than to sail under such an able officer.

"It's a disappointment to him, I suppose," continued Dale, "not to have recovered the dispatch."

"A very bitter one, indeed. And the fact that it was stolen while in his care makes it all the more so."

"There is a slim chance of its ever being recovered now," said Dale.

"I have thought a good deal about it since the impressment of that man, Dirk Hatfield," answered Ethan. "And I fancy that the paper may not come under the eye of the British ministry in such a hurry, after all."

"What makes you think that?"

"Well, in the first place, Hatfield would be forced to acknowledge himself a highwayman and tell how he came to have the dispatch in his possession."

"You forget that Danvers said that no questions would be asked the person handing it over to Lord North."

"I hold that saying in mind very well. But Hatfield would not trust to it; a hunted wolf has no confidence in the hunter, even though he have no weapon in his hands."

"What do you suppose, then, would be the man's plan of action?"

"Like Fochard, he will hold the dispatch until he can secure the service of an intermediary. A man of his desperate and enterprising nature will not remain in a king's ship very long; he'll escape at the first opportunity. Then he will seek to dispose of the paper, and it may be my luck to once more stumble upon some trace of it."

"Fate does, indeed, seem to lead you by the hand in the matter," smiled Richard Dale. "But she has, up to the present, held you back when upon the very threshold of success."

"It will not be always so, perhaps," said Ethan earnestly. "Let us hope so, at least."

The vessel landed them at Brest secretly; the Scotch skipper seemed to have some sort of an understanding with the authorities, and

though they gave him no trouble when he ran in, still he did the thing with all speed, and immediately made sail once more.

After securing lodgings they began making inquiries regarding American warships in French waters.

"There was a fleet of four ships sailed out of L'Orient not long since," replied the person asked. "The French government provided the vessels, I think, but the commander was an American."

"And who was he?"

"Why, none other than your great Captain John Paul Jones."

Ethan and Dale uttered exclamations of bitter disappointment.

"You are positive of this, I suppose," said the former.

"Quite so, monsieur. The sailing of the squadron was upon every one's tongue a short time ago."

"There is no use in crying over spilled milk," said Dale, with a sigh as they walked away. "As Captain Jones is gone, I'll have a try for some other American skipper."

But there was none in Brest at that time;

and after a two days' stay Dale said to Ethan,

"I think I'll go to L'Orient. There at least must be an American privateer there that I can get a berth in."

"I'll go with you," said Ethan; "then I shall go on to Paris, report my further failure to Dr. Franklin, and after that sail for home."

They traveled by diligence to L'Orient, which was no great distance from Brest. Dale at once sought out a shipping office which he knew to be much frequented by American shipmen in search of hands to man their crafts.

A trim looking midshipman stood near the door, and he looked at them with attention as they entered. Directly behind him loomed a tall, spare, large boned man of singular erectness. He had an ugly sabre stroke across his face.

"Longsword!" cried Ethan as his delighted eyes fell upon him.

"Master Ethan," came a deep chested shout from the Irish dragoon. Then with a wild Irish "hurro!" he leaped forward and clasped the boy in a bear-like hug.

"I thought you had been taken prisoner,"

gasped the young American, breathless from the pressure which the powerful trooper had put upon his ribs.

"And so I would have been had it not been for that broth of a gossoon Rory McHale. I never saw such seamanship as he put out of him. When the mast went he had it cleared away in a few minutes; then he sailed so close in shore that me heart was in me mouth for fear of the rocks. But he slipped the Englishman, and by daylight we were far away. But, lad," and his voice sank lower and a note of feeling crept into it that sounded strange in so grim a veteran, "I thought ye gone, indeed, when ye went over the stern. I thought to follow ye, but McHale held me back."

Ethan gripped the warm hearted fellow's hand, with the tears standing in his eyes.

"Good old Longsword!" he said, quietly. "There was never a time in my life that you were not willing and anxious to stand by me."

While they were speaking the middy had accosted Dale.

"Looking for a ship?" asked he.

"I am," said Dale.

"I'm shipping men for the Bon Homme Richard."

"Is she a privateer?"

The middy laughed.

"I should say not," he replied. "Her commander is John Paul Jones."

Ethan heard these words, and both he and Dale uttered cries of surprise.

"Captain Jones," said the former. "Why, we heard that he had just put to sea."

"Right," said the middy. "And he returned when one of his frigates ran into the flagship and stove a hole in her. We are laid up for repairs."

"Hurrah!" shouted Ethan, exultantly. Then turning to Dale he said: "You'll ship with him after all, you see."

The trim young midshipman was all attention in a moment; good seamen were very scarce, and he liked Dale's looks.

"The captain will be here in a few moments," he said, "and you can sign if you like. We need able seamen and warrant officers of a likely sort."

As he spoke the door opened and the slight, smartly uniformed figure of John Paul Jones

entered the shipping office. His eyes lighted up at sight of Ethan, and in a moment they had clasped hands.

When Ethan had sketched his experiences briefly, the captain said:

"I am delighted that you have come through it all safely. After Longsword returned and told me how you were carried over the stern of the lugger by the falling mast, I gave you up for lost. And this is Mr. Dale, is it?"

"Yes," said Ethan; "and he wants to sail with you."

The American commander's eyes gleamed with satisfaction as they took in all the fine qualities of the young sailor.

"You are a seaman, then?" he said to Dale.

"Yes, sir. My last berth was master's mate aboard the Lexington." Dale stood stiffly erect and saluted as he spoke.

"I'll ship you at the same rating," said Jones. "I wish I could get more Americans to man my vessel."

"That should be very easy now, captain,

dear," said Longsword, eagerly. "That is if what I've just heard is true."

"And what is that?"

"A lot of more than a hundred exchanged prisoners have just arrived at Nantes."

"Mr. Lunt," and the captain turned to an officer who had accompanied him, "we want those men for the Richard, and must have them."

"We will have them, sir, if it is possible," said Lunt, promptly. "I'll send messengers to Nantes at once."

During the conversation that followed Lunt's departure, Ethan had an opportunity to examine Paul Jones carefully. Deep lines of care were in his face—lines that had not been there before, and a sprinkling of silver also showed in his hair. And little wonder. Since returning from his voyage upon the Ranger, he had encountered nothing but heart-breaking delays, rebuffs and disappointments.

Since France had also gone to war with England he had expected to receive command of a French ship to sail under the stars and

stripes. But nothing had come of it. Hopes of one kind or another were held out to him from time to time, but all resulted in bitter disappointments.

At length a rich banker of Paris, Le Ray de Chaumont, who admired the Americans and earnestly desired victory for the cause of liberty, took an active part in Jones' affairs; and at last the king was moved to do something for the American officer.

"We will place him in command of a squadron, make a descent upon Liverpool, and land a military force. Lafayette has just arrived from America in good time; we shall have him in command of the troops."

But there were no warships at hand for this venture; so, by request, Jones had gone from port seeking vessels that could be converted. At L'Orient he came upon a huge old-fashioned merchantman that had sailed for some fifteen years in the India trade and had been finally condemned, dismantled and allowed to gradually fall into a state of ruin. This old vessel was called the Duc de Duras, and was the most likely one that the hard pressed officer could find.

"She was eventually purchased for me," John Paul Jones said, in telling Ethan the story, "and so were two other and smaller merchant ships—the Pallas and the Vengeance. A fine American frigate was also placed under my command; she is called the Alliance; then there is also the Cerf, a king's cutter.

"I at once set about getting these vessels into condition for the cruise. The name of the Duc de Duras I changed to that of Bon Homme Richard. That, as I suppose you know, is the title of the French translation of Dr. Franklin's 'Poor Richard's Almanac,' of which I am a great admirer."

As Ethan learned, the Richard was a ship of obsolete type; her towering poop and top-gallant forecastle gave her a strange and ancient look. Neglect had rotted her timbers and weakened her frame; and she was scarcely sound enough to stand the necessary repairs.

Nevertheless, her captain went bravely ahead and did all he could to strengthen her. He pierced her for twenty-eight guns on her main deck, and six on the tall forecastle and poop.

"It was my intention to arm her with eighteen pounders," the captain continued; "but could get nothing heavier than nine pounders for the quarter-deck and forecastle; but I got six eighteens for the deck below; they are poorly-made guns, however, and to speak the plain truth, I'm rather afraid of them."

"A poor ship," commented Ethan, soberly. "It's a great pity that something better could not be done for you."

"A vessel ill-adapted to warfare is not the worst that I have had to contend with," returned Captain Jones, rather bitterly. "The crew that I was forced to ship is a most curious mixture of races, and the fiercest and most unruly body of men that I ever saw gathered upon a ship's deck. There are a very few Americans; England, Ireland, Scotland, France and Norway have all contributed to my ship's company, as have Africa, India and the Malayan Peninsula.

"When my squadron sailed and I had brought my crew into some sort of discipline I fancied that my troubles were about over for a time. But then my captains, under the

leadership of Pierre Landais, commander of the Alliance, began to show their teeth; and one night the Alliance ran afoul of the Richard, and we were compelled to put back for overhauling."

"It may not prove a bad thing either," said Ethan at this point. "If you secure this cartel of exchanges at Nantes you'll have a crew that you can rely upon."

As it afterward appeared, Ethan guessed the truth. The American prisoners about whom Longsword had spoken had just arrived in France, burning with the desire to fight against the country which had treated them so cruelly in its prisons. They were a fine body of men, stalwart and skilled in the handling of sea-going ships, and they leavened the mass of the Richard's crew wonderfully when they came on board; from a semi-rabble of mutinous ruffians it came, in the end, to be as effective and steady a ship's company as an officer could desire.

The repairs upon the Bon Homme Richard were carried on rapidly. Dale took his place on board and his practical judgment and sound sense soon attracted the attention of

all. He had a knack of handling men, and could get more labor out of them by a cheerful, encouraging manner than most of the others could by their hectoring and loud impatience. Captain Jones noticed this; the quiet, thorough manner of the young Virginian pleased him, for it spoke of an alert and ready mind.

Ethan was aware of all this, and when, one day, Dale came to him with sparkling eyes and face flushed with pleasure, he was not at all surprised at his bursting out,

"Old fellow, great news! Captain Jones has secured me a commission."

"I knew he would," cried Ethan, delightedly. "He approved of your work from the first."

"But in my wildest flights, I've never hoped for so long a step," said Dale. "I'm to be first lieutenant of the Richard."

Ethan whistled; Longsword, who stood at his side, raised his brows.

"Well, I call that going up the ladder at a pretty stiff speed," the Irishman remarked. "But, sure, it's nothing more than your due, Mr. Dale; ye can handle men

and things better nor any one I ever saw before."

It was one of the qualities of John Paul Jones that he recognized exceptional ability at a glance; and that he possessed this knack was a most fortunate thing for him at this most critical period in his career, for the time was fast approaching when the sterling metal of Richard Dale turned the scale in his favor and snatched victory from the very jaws of defeat.

The little squadron left the roads of Groix on the morning of August 14th, 1779, and ventured once more into the narrow seas. The expedition against Liverpool had been abandoned long before, and the further crippling of the commerce of England was now the object of the cruise.

After some days out, and the capturing of a number of prizes, the Cerf, because of the insubordination of her crew, returned to France; the Alliance, whose captain, Landais, continued to give Jones trouble whenever he could, parted from the little fleet, and when the Firth of Forth was entered the Bon Homme Richard was accompanied only by the Vengeance and the Pallas.

Many prizes were taken and many adventures were met with. Near Flamborough Head one evening the Richard sunk a collier; the Vengeance was near at hand, but the Pallas had borne off to the northeast in chase of a sloop. A pilot taken from the collier gave information regarding a fleet of forty-one sail from the Baltic and under convoy of two British ships of war. This immediately fired the ambition of John Paul Jones; if he could get into the midst of this huge, helpless fleet he could, perhaps, cut out a score of them.

Toward daylight next morning he chased two ships for several hours; dawn revealed these to be the Alliance and the Pallas. Captain Jones at once communicated to their commanders the news of the nearness of the fleet of merchantmen.

Ethan Carlyle had borne the news to the Alliance, and when the boat was once more hoisted into the Bon Homme Richard he said to Captain Jones:

"Captain Landais does not seem at all delighted at the prospect. He seemed to fear that some of the vessels might be armed."

Paul Jones' eyes flashed scornfully.

"He's of the same kidney as Simpson, then. I fancied as much."

They were still in the latitude of Flamborough Head, about two leagues off the English coast, when the Baltic fleet hove in sight. The great mass of merchantmen came stretching out from behind the Head, bearing northeast from the Richard.

"Lay the ship as close to them as you can, Mr. Dale," directed the commander.

Dale put a press of sail upon the flag-ship and made for the convoy as the Richard passed the Alliance and Pallas, which hung close together. Paul Jones heard Landais call to the commander of the other vessel,

"If they have above fifty guns there will be nothing left to do but run for it!"

This was said, of course, in the presence of the crews of both ships, and had a most demoralizing effect upon them. In a very little while both vessels began beating to and fro in a hesitating, alarmed way, showing no disposition to advance.

"We'll have to attack alone, I think," said Ethan to the commander.

"It looks very much like it," replied Jones, bitterly. "But we will do it, for there is no halting or turning back now."

And so the Bon Homme Richard bore down upon the fleet alone.

As the pilot of the collier had said, the Baltic merchantmen were convoyed by two vessels of war. One of these was the Serapis, a new and splendid ship, mounting forty-four guns on two decks and carrying a crew of three hundred and twenty men. The other was the Countess of Scarborough, armed with twenty-four guns on her main deck and with a ship's company of one hundred and fifty men.

As the Richard came down upon them some of the frightened merchantmen began firing with their light guns. An alarm spread through the fleet at the sound of the guns; the two men-of-war were astern of them all, keeping them in place; but now at the signals of danger they both came to the front with great promptness, while the convoy scurried toward the shore once more. Captain Pearson of the Serapis knew with whom he had to deal; a little time before the bailiff of Scar-

borough Castle had put off in a boat and informed him that John Paul Jones was operating on the coast.

The Englishman trusted to the guns of Scarborough Castle to protect the merchantmen while they stood out to sea and prepared for action.

It was night before the Richard came up with them, as the breeze was very light; about eight bells both British ships tacked and stood in for shore; Jones at once altered his course with a view of cutting them off. At sight of this manœuvre the skipper of the Pallas thought the crew of the Richard had mutinied in the face of the foe; so he hauled his wind quickly and stood out. Landais brought the Alliance to a long distance to windward, and most coolly awaited developments, never seeming to trouble himself a moment over the fact that his duty called him to render the Richard all the aid in his power.

As the ship of John Paul Jones drew near, a deep voice from the quarter-deck of the Serapis hailed her.

"Ahoy! What ship is that?"

It was then a quarter past eight; the moon

swung like a great disc of silver in the heavens; the sea was scarcely ruffled, so still was the air. It was Richard Dale who answered the hail.

"Come a little nearer," he shouted, "and we'll tell you!"

The tall poop and forecastle of the Richard seemed to excite derision upon the British ship; she stood hugely out of the water with an ark-like loom; and she had a dull, slow-moving air, vastly different from the smart and powerful Serapis.

"What are you laden with, old Noah's ark?" called the voice from the Englishman, and the question was accompanied by contemptuous laughter.

"We carry round, grape and double-headed shot," answered Richard Dale.

And no sooner had he uttered the words than a sheet of red flame burst from the side of the Serapis and she poured her range of upper and quarter-deck guns into the high hull of the Richard.

CHAPTER XXIV

HOW THE SERAPIS STRUCK HER FLAG

JOHN PAUL JONES, a dark, slender figure, paced calmly to and fro upon his quarter-deck.

"You may fire, Mr. Dale," he said composedly.

Dale passed the word; the gunners applied their matches and the whole broadside of the Richard hurled destruction at the grim Englishman. From that moment the night was ablaze; broadside answered broadside with echoing fury; the men at the guns, stripped to the waist, with hard set mouths and scowling brows, charged, rammed and fired like clockwork. Men standing behind screens, drenched with water, handed out charges of powder to boys who darted up and down the ladders like monkeys, passing the explosive to the guns.

Every man was belted with cutlass and pistol; stands of grape and round shot, and

boarding pikes stood about. Grappling irons and boarding nettings were ready for instant use in case the ships should touch. Aloft the yards of the Richard swarmed with marines, muskets in hand; another large body of the sea-soldiery were also upon the poop and forecastle. These were Frenchmen; they were under the command of a colonel and, for the most part, were good marksmen.

The rending thunder of the cannonade never halted for a moment. Ethan Carlyle and Longsword worked an after gun like furies; their bare bodies, in the light of the battle lanterns, were black with the grime of the guns; from beneath their sweat-matted shocks of hair their eyes glowed like coals.

The Countess of Scarborough at the beginning of the fight had not dared to fire into the Richard for fear of injuring the Serapis; but as the battle grew older she began to seek a position from which she might venture to take part.

Ethan noted this, for the moonlight showed them the ship's actions; he said to Longsword,

"There goes the other one; hot work, Shamus."

"The Pallas is going to meet her, faith," cried the dragoon as that vessel suddenly darted into the blaze of the guns and made for the second Englishman.

"No fear of the Alliance doing anything of the kind," said Ethan, darting a fierce glance toward that splendid but silent frigate as she rose and fell to the seas, off in the moonlight. "If I were the commander of this squadron I'd hang that fellow Landais from his own yard arm as soon as this action was over!"

The main deck batteries were working famously but soon Dale rushed up from below with news of disaster.

"Three of the long eighteens on the starboard side have exploded, sir," he reported to Captain Jones. "Most of their crews have been killed or injured."

The firm mouth of the chief tightened; then he replied:

"Abandon those other eighteens upon the port side. I have always suspected the quality of those pieces, and feared that something like this might happen."

This order was carried out. From that time on all the heavy guns of the Richard

were out of action; to win she must depend upon her lighter ones alone.

For some time Pearson had been trying to get his vessel under the stern of the American ship; Jones prevented this by masterly seamanship. But the Richard answered her helm slowly, while the swift Serapis moved like a hawk. At length the Englishman secured the coveted position and the American's deck was raked murderously by whole broadsides and showers of musketry. Some of the heavy shot went through and through the Richard's rotten timbers; great holes were blown in her that gaped like windows.

The marines fore and aft were killed in crowds; and at length the French colonel in charge of them withdrew what few remained to safer positions. In spite of the sand which had been thrown about, the decks of the converted Indiaman were slippery with blood; the killed lay upon every side, and the horrid, hopeless cries of the wounded were dreadful to hear. The guns of the Richard were useless while the Serapis held her present position; the only damage that the Americans were doing was by the small arms' fire from the top.

With his deck reeling beneath him, and the very frame of his crazy old ship almost rent asunder by the shocks of her own guns, the dauntless commander of the Bon Homme Richard sprang along his shot swept rail into that sleet of death. He had seen the desperate efforts of Ethan Carlyle and Longsword to drag a gun to a position from which it could be brought to bear upon the enemy, and now lent his aid in placing it.

"Warm work, sir!" panted the Irish dragoon.

"Ay," answered the commander grimly, as he sighted the gun, "and 'twill be hotter still before we are done."

"They don't seem to be hulling us with their lower battery as they did some time ago," said Ethan, who had noted this remarkable fact. Although the ships were within pistol shot of one another and the big guns of the Serapis roared incessantly they seemed to be doing no damage.

"The reason is simple enough," said the captain coolly, as he took the blazing match from Longsword's hand. "Dale reports that they have shot six port holes into one on both

sides and their balls are passing clear through us without striking."

As he fired the gun a man sprang upon deck and saluted. It was Richard Dale.

"We are leaking badly, sir," he said. "They have struck us repeatedly below the water line, and the surgeon has been forced to clear the cock-pit of all the wounded."

"Have you manned the pumps?"

"Yes, sir."

Paul Jones gave a quick command. A number of guns were dragged to positions from which they could play upon the British ship. Their roar was growing in volume and steadiness, when suddenly the supply of powder ceased to be handed through the hatches.

Richard Dale and Ethan Carlyle, at Jones' command, plunged below to learn the cause of this.

"Ammunition for the main deck," roared Dale in a voice to be heard above the Englishman's guns.

The warrant officer in charge of the magazine stood at its locked door, a pistol in his hand, and when Dale and Ethan seized him roughly he said:

"There was nothing else to do but lock the door, sir. The news came that the ship was sinking and the quartermaster released all the prisoners so that they might have a chance for their lives. See, the deck below here is crowded with them."

As Dale and Ethan looked they saw the truth of this; the gun deck was thronged with desperate looking men who greatly outnumbered the Richard's crew, and they were huddling together, apparently for a rush to the main deck for an attempt to take the ship. The quick wit of Dale was equal to this new and novel danger. He leaped toward them and shouted in a voice that all could hear:

"Men, the ship is sinking!"

The faces of the great throng of released prisoners blanched; then Dale continued:

"You have one chance for your lives; to the pumps, or you are all dead men!"

With eager haste the British seamen sprang to obey; if they had known it, they could now have crawled through the ports of the Richard into the Serapis, for Captain Jones, by a masterly stroke of seamanship, had at length placed his vessel alongside the English-

man, and locked their yards together. But fate would have it that British brawn should keep the Richard afloat while her crew strove against their countrymen. As Ethan and Dale regained the main deck, the ammunition once more began to come through the hatches; but the guns were still silent.

All this time the Serapis had been pouring death into the huge, helpless hulk of the American. The Richard was a wreck—shattered, reeling and all but sinking. Her crew had deserted her main deck, her dead lay about in heaps. The moonlight, streaming down upon the scene showed the slight figure of John Paul Jones as he worked desperately at a dismounted gun, almost alone, but with a determination to win that only death could destroy. Captain Pearson, of the Serapis, astonished at the Richard's silence, now shouted:

"Have you struck?"

Jones lifted his head and his answer rang proudly above the din of the battle.

"I have not yet begun to fight!"

There was something in this answer that gave renewed courage to the American seamen; they manned their pieces once more; a

steady fire from the tops slackened the gunnery of the Serapis, perceptibly; then a sudden flare showed the latter to be on fire, and her gun crews rushed to extinguish the blaze.

In the meantime the Pallas had engaged the Countess of Scarborough, and after a brisk action had forced her to strike. The Alliance now advanced, and to the astonishment of all she poured a broadside into the Richard.

"She's been taken by the British!" gasped Longsword.

"It's that mad Frenchman, Landais," cried Richard Dale, in a fury. "See, the signal is set," pointing to the lights on the Richard's side. "He cannot have mistaken us for the enemy."

The Alliance managed to dismount some guns and do the Richard considerable other damage before she silenced her fire, and hauled off once more.

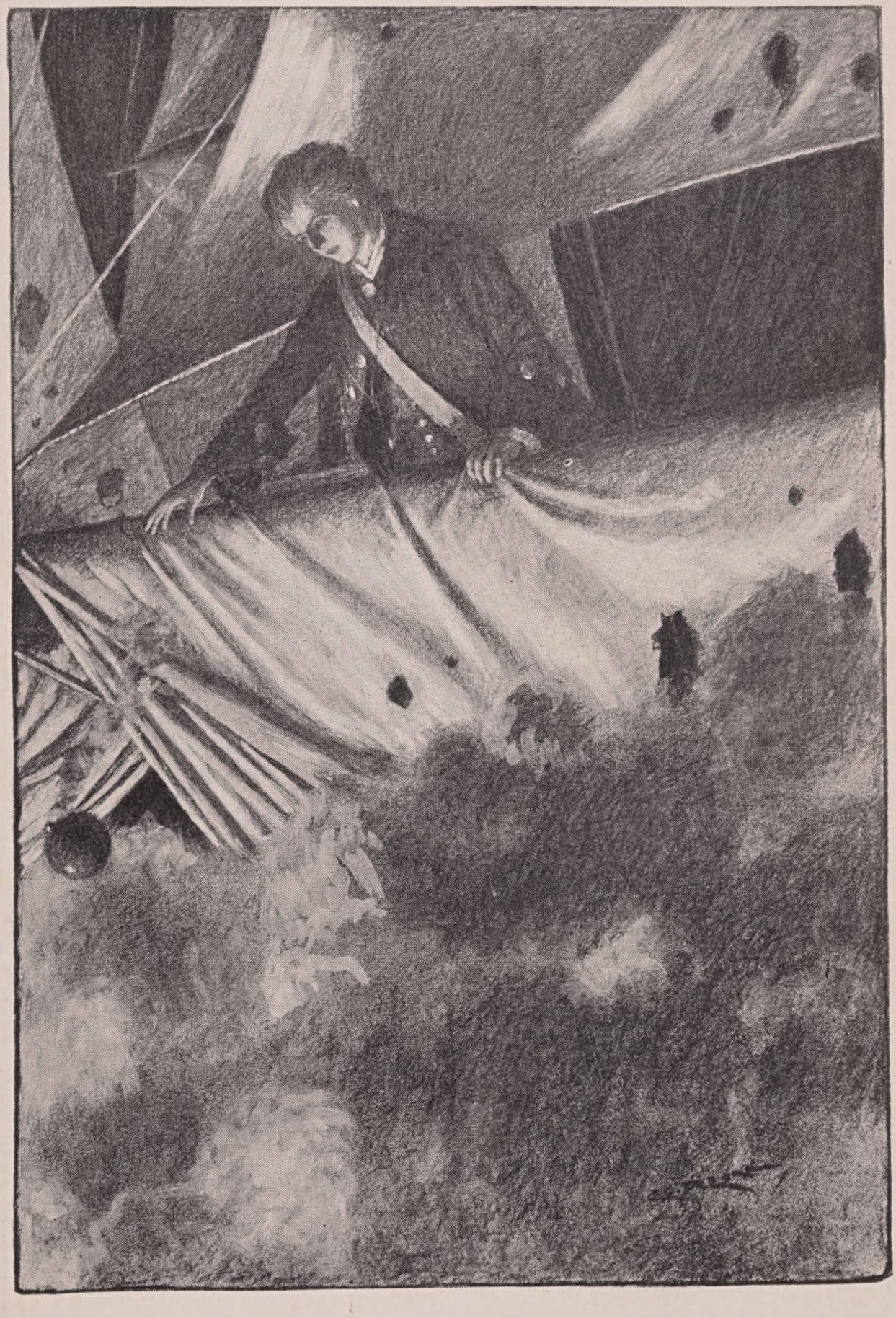
The fire from the Richard's top had succeeded in clearing the Serapis above board; but her heavy guns on the lower deck were still pounding away in a most murderous fashion. The heavy lashings that Captain

Jones had brought into use when the Richard's bow touched the Serapis some time before were all that saved the former; had the Englishman managed to get free and been able to haul away, she could have sunk the American at her leisure.

Under these conditions the battle continued to rage; hour after hour passed and still the bulldog Briton and the dauntless Yankee grappled in their death struggle, the red flare of the guns blazing paths of fire along the still waters of the sea. The pumps were still at work and the prisoners labored in relays; but the Richard sank lower and still lower in the water. Captain Jones was pounding away with two guns at the masts of the Serapis thinking to cripple her in this way and then secure a position in which he could rake her with his main deck battery. As this was proceeding Longsword plucked Dale by the sleeve.

"Look there, on the main top."

Dale glanced upward, and saw Ethan Carlyle crawling out upon the yard. He had a ship's bucket filled to the top with hand grenades; from the spar of the Richard he crept



HE BEGAN TO THROW THE GRENADES

to that of the Serapis ; when he reached a position directly over the deck of the British ship he paused and slung his bucket to the spar by a hook.

Then he began to throw the grenades. There were but few men upon the deck of the Englishman, as has been said before, the musketry fire having driven most of them below ; the grenades cleared these few away like magic ; and then Ethan began to throw his explosives into the hatches. As fate would have it some loose powder upon the lower gun deck of the Serapis caught, and an instant later a sheet of flame went up, followed by the roar of a terrific explosion. A panic seized the crew of the Englishman ; they rushed upon the deck throwing down their arms and crying for quarter.

Ethan came down the ratlines of the Serapis like a flash, just as Richard Dale swung himself from a broken brace upon the quarter-deck, and the English captain with his own hands hauled down his flag.

" Have you struck ? " asked the gallant first officer of the Richard.

" I have," answered Captain Pearson.

No sooner had the words been spoken than a man with a blood-stained bandage swathed about his head sprang upon deck; he had a sword in his hand and his fierce face was black with powder smoke and smeared with blood.

"The officer below inquires if the enemy has surrendered," he said to Captain Pearson.

"Report to him that it is I who have surrendered," returned Pearson, bitterly.

"You!" exclaimed the man. "Why, in a few more broadsides they are ours. A prisoner just crawled through a port and says that they are sinking."

Captain Pearson cast a swift glance at the seamen of the Richard, who were now leaping upon his deck; but he drooped his head with a groan when he saw that he was powerless.

"The Serapis has struck," said Dale to the man with the bandaged head. "Pass the word below."

"Very well, sir," said the man.

Ethan was watching this man curiously, and when he turned to spring below he found the young American confronting him with ready cutlass.

"Mr. Dale said pass the word," said Ethan, sternly. "You need not bother about going below in person."

That it had been the man's intention to tell his officer to continue the fight was clear from the baffled look which he gave Ethan. The latter then stepped close to him and continued in a low voice,

"And another thing—I would very much like to have the paper which you took that night upon the by-road to London, Master Dirk Hatfield."

At the sound of his name, the highwayman made a sudden forward leap and cut desperately at Ethan; but the young American's guard was up and he caught the descending blade upon his own; then with a twist of the wrist he disarmed his opponent and held his point at his throat.

By this time the decks of the Serapis swarmed with American seamen. Longsword pinned the highwayman's arms at his sides, while Ethan's eager hands sought out the much desired dispatch. At length he drew it from an inner pocket and held it up with a cry of triumph.

John Paul Jones, who stood near, turned upon the boy as he heard the cry.

"What have you there?" he asked.

"The dispatch," exclaimed Ethan joyfully. "Here is the highwayman of whom I spoke to you," pointing to Hatfield, "and he still had it in his possession."

"Fortune still follows you," cried Jones as he took the paper which the lad held out to him.

"And misfortune seems to follow me," spoke the knight of the road as they led him away among the other prisoners. "There is ten thousand pounds gone to pot."

The crew of the Serapis was disarmed and imprisoned below. Then, as the shattered Richard threatened to sink at any moment, the prisoners and wounded were hastily distributed between the Pallas and the captured Englishman; the American commander and his crew shifting to the latter ship which, though badly crippled in the rigging, was still seaworthy.

The Richard's own crew and some from the Pallas strove at the pumps to keep out the inrushing water from the doomed vessel; but

their efforts were of no avail, and on the morning of the twenty-fifth their officers called them away.

As the last man was going over the side into Lieutenant Dale's boat, Ethan Carlyle swarmed up the damaged shrouds of the American ship.

"Come back," shouted Dale. "She is going down."

But the boy continued upward till he reached the main top; then he drew from beneath his arm a flag, and with a few rapid blows nailed it to the mast. He had descended and clambered into the boat, which pulled rapidly away, before the Richard gave her last heavy shuddering lurch; then, with her battle flag streaming above her, she dipped grandly and sank slowly beneath the waves.

CHAPTER XXV

HOME AND LIBERTY

THE American squadron and its prizes put into the Texal; Landais was at once removed from his command and sent home to France. In a short time Paul Jones, with Ethan and Longsword, sailed in the Alliance for that country also, the commander having shifted his crew and officers into that vessel.

The delight of Dr. Franklin at receiving the long lost dispatch was very great; and he thanked the three over and over again. The day following their arrival at Paris, he took Ethan aside.

"There are many important things which I desire to say to Congress," said the philosopher, "and I want a trusty messenger to carry my report. Will you go?"

For some time Ethan had felt a longing for home and friends; and now that the paper was recovered he had nothing further to keep him in France. So he answered eagerly:

"I will."

"Very well," said Dr. Franklin in a pleased tone. "A French cruiser sails for Baltimore within a week."

"If your report is ready I will cross in her," said Ethan, promptly.

The minister's dispatches were ready next day, and Ethan bid good-bye to Captain Jones and Richard Dale.

"We stay to fight the English," said the former, as he clasped the lad's hand, "and you will return to fight them, I know."

"They are striking good blows at home," said Dale, "and we upon this side must look to ourselves or we'll be left far behind."

The last that Ethan saw of this gallant pair they were standing upon the flags of a Paris street waving their hats in farewell as he and Longsword once more took the road for Brest.

The young American and Irish dragoon arrived in good time at that seaport and boarded the cruiser the day before she sailed. After a voyage of six weeks against contrary winds they were landed at Baltimore, and at once set out for Philadelphia.

Since they had set foot in that city it had been in the hands of the British, and Sir

Henry Clinton had only evacuated it a short time before.

Dr. Franklin's dispatches were delivered to Mr. Hancock, and were eagerly received and laid before Congress.

"I hope, sir," said Ethan to Mr. Jefferson when he presented himself to the great Virginian, "that you did not object to my sailing with Captain Jones and so delaying my return."

"Not in the least," said Mr. Jefferson. "Dr. Franklin wrote me the reason for it; you did what I would have expected you to do—and you did it well."

"Things are going badly for the cause, sir, I hear."

"You arrive home at the country's most gloomy period," said Jefferson, gravely. "Dark shadows seem to overhang us, and the British press upon us from every side; the want of money makes Congress all but helpless; our armies are lately scattered in the south, and in the north Washington can do little more than fly before the battalions of Clinton."

There was a silence between them for some time; then Ethan said quietly:

"In that case, sir, it seems to me that the nation wants a soldier much more than you want a secretary."

Jefferson took his meaning instantly, and wrung his hand.

"You are right," said he heartily. "But why not the navy? You are a born sailor."

"I have witnessed too much of the delays of that branch of the service," said Ethan. "Constant waiting ashore for a ship while my country needed my strength would be more than I could stand."

"Then the army it shall be," cried Mr. Jefferson. "You shall have a commission within the week."

The Virginian was as good as his word. The commission was in Ethan's hands in a week's time; and in a fortnight he was serving as a lieutenant in a regiment of horse in the army under Washington.

As the years of the conflict unrolled he rose in rank and in the esteem of his commanders. Was there a hard-fought field, where only desperate courage and shrewd blows carried the patriots to victory? Then there you would be sure to find Ethan Carlyle, in the press of

it, and at his side the grim old war dog, Longsword.

And when peace spread her glittering wings above a new-born nation, the gallant boy, now grown a young man, and with the epaulets of a major upon his broad shoulders, laid down his bright sword with a sigh of mingled regret and satisfaction.

"The war is done," said Longsword.

"Yes," replied Ethan, soberly. "The war is done; and now comes the longer struggle to give the nation permanent life."

THE END

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